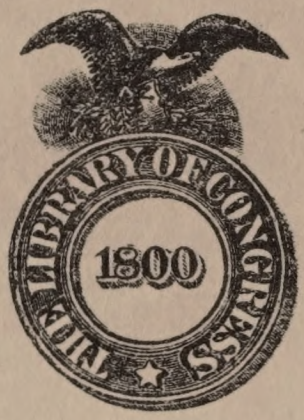

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UNDER FIRE.

CHAPTER I.

LOVE'S YOUNG DREAM.

"I believe you promised me this dance, Miss McVane," said Royal Chetwood, pausing in front of one of South Carolina's fairest daughters.

"Yes," replied the charming young lady, blushing like a rose as she turned to the gentleman who till this moment had engaged her attention.

"You will excuse me, Captain Trafton, for a few moments."

The music struck up, and Chetwood and his partner were presently lost in the mazy waltz.

Captain Trafton, who wore the uniform of the State militia, looked after the pair with anything but a pleased expression on his saturnine face.

It was easy to see that he had been interrupted in what, at least to him, was a delightful *tete-a-tete*, and he evidently resented the gentleman's action in claiming what was undoubtedly his right—the fulfillment of a previous engagement.

Captain Trafton's eyes glittered ominously.

He stroked his mustache nervously.

Apparently, he was not a man who took even conventional annoyances as a gentleman ought.

In the present instance he was more than put out.

It was the first chance of the evening that he had seized upon to detain the daughter of the house at his side.

He was deeply interested in the fair Southern girl, for she was not only a lovely woman, but the only child and heiress of the McVane property, which was no inconsiderable portion, as Senator McVane, late of the United States Senate, was a man of great influence and wealth in the Palmetto State.

It will be presumed, then, that Captain Trafton had cast his eyes upon the possibility of winning not only a charming wife, but a handsome fortune as well.

Under these circumstances the gallant officer might well be excused for feeling a trifle sore.

But Captain Trafton had a far more potent reason for his displeasure.

He had for some time recognized Royal Chetwood as a dangerous rival.

And not without reason.

The handsome young fellow had made a decided impression upon Miss McVane.

Nor was she alone the only woman who admired the stalwart young Pennsylvanian, since his social *debut* among the *elite* of Charleston.

More than one designing mother had set her net, so to speak, for him, but though the target for many a bright eye and winsome smile, this young Chesterfield seemed yet to be perfectly heart whole, unless indeed Miss McVane herself was the fortunate young lady.

Senator McVane had given the reception, which was a ball on a small scale, in honor of his daughter's nineteenth birthday.

It was well attended by the aristocratic set in which the distinguished politician and his family moved, notwithstanding the critical state of affairs in Charleston.

Though mirth and social gayety reigned supreme

in the mansion that evening, all were more or less on the *qui vive* for the expected climax.

Indeed, it seemed to be generally understood that unless Major Anderson, who had within the last two weeks taken possession of Fort Sumter, down the bay, surrendered the garrison to General Beauregard, the fort would be bombarded before daylight.

Preparations looking toward such a contingency had been going on for days.

Batteries had been hastily thrown up on Sullivan's Island, and at Morris Point, and a floating battery constructed and anchored within favorable range of the uncompleted battlements of Sumter.

The guns of Fort Moultrie, lately vacated by Anderson, and those of Fort Johnson, nearer the city, were already trained upon the object of attack.

Altogether, the arrangements made by General Beauregard were both formidable and menacing.

Only a spark was needed to set the inflammable material in motion and encircle the grand old fortress with a blaze of shot and shell.

The inhabitants of Charleston and vicinity were aroused to the highest pitch of excitement, and at the hour our story opens the wharves and every available point of vantage commanding the harbor were crowded with expectant spectators waiting for the curtain to rise on the lurid drama.

The McVane mansion was so situated as to overlook the waters of Charleston harbor.

The male guests of the evening divided their attention between the fair women present, the wine-room in the annex, and the grounds and veranda looking seaward.

A strange sense of excitement and exhilaration throbbed in every one's veins.

Even the ladies crowded the windows and parts of the veranda between the dances, eagerly discussing the situation with their admirers.

Royal Chetwood alone of all that throng was inwardly troubled.

He was a Northern man, and his whole sympathies were with the North in this momentous hour.

He was uneasy because he feared the worst.

He strongly deprecated the stand taken by the South.

He was opposed to a continuance of slavery.

But he was far too tactful to express any opinion, except a very guarded one, in the face of the overwhelming opposition.

Though many suspected the true sentiments of the handsome visitor, no one attempted to draw him forcibly into an argument.

Southern chivalry forbade such a violation of hospitality.

Therefore, beyond an occasional bit of harmless badinage, which he skillfully parried, Royal Chetwood was subjected to no unpleasant *contretemps*.

So while mirth and music whiled the moments away, the volcano smoldered beneath the very feet of the dancers.

As the last notes of the waltz died away, Royal Chetwood led his charming partner back to her seat.

But Captain Trafton had gone away, so our hero, taking advantage of the situation, monopolized the fair girl's attention for the time being.

"I am afraid, Miss McVane, this may be our last meeting for some time to come," said Royal, wistfully gazing into Bertha's face.

"Our last, Mr. Chetwood?" said the lovely girl, her bright smile vanishing in a moment.

"Yes," he said, almost sadly, "our last. I expect to go North to-morrow."

"So soon," she said, looking down at the carpet.

"I am sorry, but——"

He paused, scarcely knowing how to excuse the

sudden resolution he had decided upon some time before.

She did not seem to notice his embarrassment.

"I wish to say how much I have enjoyed this visit," he continued, desperately. "Charleston is a beautiful city, and I have been very handsomely treated by all whose acquaintance it has been my good fortune to make. But——"

"I understand," said Bertha, in a low voice. "You are a Northern man—you see much transpiring about you here at this unfortunate crisis which hurts you. Am I not right?"

"You have guessed it," he said, his heart throbbing violently, "and you, I fear, will soon think of me with feelings of—of——"

He could not bring himself to pronounce the word.

"Of what, Mr. Chetwood?" she said, raising her large, lustrous eyes suddenly to his face.

"Repugnance," he blurted out.

"Why should I? Indeed, you surprise me. I have always——"

She stopped and blushed vividly.

"You are a Southern girl," he said.

"Yes," she said, proudly, "I am."

"Need I say more?" said Royal, almost pathetically. "Our friendship has been the sweetest episode of my brief visit here. You have been more than kind, and—and I hope you don't think me ungrateful; but I fear there is a shadow rising between us—the same that is at this moment menacing the tranquillity of our country. Oh, Bertha—Miss McVane——"

His secret had escaped him when he uttered her Christian name.

And now she, too, was much agitated.

Yet with an effort she laid her beautiful hand, sparkling with diamonds, upon his arm and lifted her eyes to his face.

She saw tears sparkling beneath his eyelashes, and her woman's heart warmed to him with all the strength that a true, sympathetic, loving nature yields to the object of its first attachment.

The moment was fateful for those two young hearts.

For the time being, they were unconscious of their surroundings, unmindful that the music had struck up again for a cotilion, and that another gentleman was approaching to claim the fair girl for his partner in one of the sets forming.

Royal seized her fingers with a tremulous grasp.

The words, so sweet when uttered by one we love, fluttered upon his lips, when——

"Miss McVane, may I have the pleasure——"

The gentleman to whom she was engaged for the dance stood smiling before them.

The airy bubble of the moment broke and vanished.

"Certainly, Mr. Hollis," said Bertha, instantly recovering her self-possession, and rising from the sofa.

Casting a glance at Royal, which thrilled him for many a day afterward, she accepted the proffered arm and was gone.

And Chetwood's eyes followed her fairy-like form wistfully, hungrily, like one famished—as indeed he was—for very love.

CHAPTER II.

'TWIXT LOVE AND DUTY.

The wine-room was crowded.

Senator McVane, standing upon a chair, was addressing his male guests with all the fervor that his patriotic Southern blood could throw into his speech.

"The Southern States," he was saying, "have in the exercise of the inherent right of every free people to change or reform their political institutions, with-

drawn from the Federal Union, and formed a government of their own. I repeat, gentlemen, the Confederate States at this moment constitute an independent nation."

His voice was drowned in a round of applause and a rattle of glasses.

"The South has already crossed the Rubicon," continued the Senator, "and whatever may be the final result, impartial history will record the innocence of the Confederate States and place the responsibility of the blood and mourning that may ensue upon those who have denied the great fundamental doctrine of American liberty that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed."

Here the speaker was again interrupted by another vehement demonstration, clearly showing how high partisan feeling ran.

"There is no one present but is aware that we have tried to arrive at a peaceful solution of the present crisis. We sent commissioners to Washington a month ago, fully authorized to adjust all questions growing out of this political separation. The national authorities at the capital, however, have seen fit to ignore their mission; and the active naval and military preparations of the United States Government, as well as the formal notice served upon General Beauregard, commander of our forces around this harbor, that President Lincoln intends to provision and reinforce Fort Sumter, for forcible means if necessary, can only be construed as a declaration of war against the Confederate States, for the President of the United States knows that Fort Sumter cannot be provisioned without the effusion of blood."

The excitement was now at fever heat, and the applause deafening.

"Gentlemen, I have but one word more to say. It is now one o'clock in the morning. Within one hour from this time, unless Major Anderson reconsiders

his determination, fire will be opened on Fort Sumter."

Senator McVane descended from his impromptu pedestal and mingled with his enthusiastic guests.

One hour more.

Beauregard, fortified with instructions from Montgomery, the capital of the Confederacy, had sent his ultimatum to the beleaguered garrison down the bay.

Sixty seconds!

How fateful with the destinies of the greatest nation on the face of the globe!

Who could foresee the results which would follow the flash of the first gun fired in anger against the Stars and Stripes!

The guests began to thin out, as most of the ladies were anxious to get home before the impending bombardment commenced.

Captain Trafton was pacing up and down the veranda.

His brow was black as the night, and his eyes wore a menacing expression.

"She loves that fellow!" he muttered, between his teeth. "I can read the truth in her eyes, in every action when he is by her side. And I was so sure of her, until he came—until to-night! But it shall never be! Even were I indifferent on the subject, her father would never permit her to entertain the proposals of a Northern man. Every smile she bestowed upon him to-night bore its fruit in an added hatred against the man who has dared to come between me and the woman of my heart. He shall pay dearly for them. I will grind this fair gallant beneath my heel as I would a viper in my path. I swear it! It will be an evil hour for any man when he presumes to thwart me—be the object what it may."

The captain clearly showed the violent and implacable side of his character.

The mask of conventionality was for the time be-

ing torn aside, and his soul lay bare with all the venom of his fierce, and we may say, cowardly nature uppermost.

We are glad to say that Captain Trafton was far from representing any type of true Southern chivalry.

Those who knew him best respected him the least, for strive as he might, the polluted blood ever betrayed itself.

And he was conscious of his weakness, and the knowledge rankled in his heart, and added fuel to the passions of an unbridled nature.

"I will kill him!" he exclaimed, at last, and turning on his heel passed down the steps into the extensive grounds about the house.

It wanted but a few minutes of two o'clock.

The great parlor that an hour before echoed to the strains of gay music and the rippling laughter of light-hearted women was almost deserted.

The last of the guests were exchanging their final morsels of small talk with Mrs. McVane and dropping out in pairs.

In the shadows of the curtain that draped one of the French windows, Royal Chetwood stood holding Bertha McVane's fair fingers in his tremulous grasp.

The present was theirs, but the future—ah!

Royal was, may we use the expression, miserably happy.

And Bertha, swayed by her warm Southern patriotism on the one side, and her love for the handsome Pennsylvanian on the other, stood trembling by his side.

Their very silence was a pathetic exhibition of the crisis that swayed men's souls and—women's.

Poor Cupid had shot his arrows with unerring accuracy, and now his impalpable presence hovered over the pair in mute anxiety for the result.

One—two!

The silvery chimes of the Sevres clock on the

mantel chimed the hour, and History held her breath.

"Bertha."

Royal Chetwood's voice quivered.

He felt her fingers tighten in his grasp.

"In a few moments we shall know the irrevocable decree of fate. I love you, God knows how dearly, but," he said, a proud enthusiasm lighting up his eyes, "I love my country also. Heaven forbid that the blood of heroes, who knew no North or South, spilled on many fields in the Revolutionary War—spilled here in Charleston, behind the ramparts of the old Palmetto fort, where Moultrie frowns to-night, to preserve to us, their descendants, a free and glorious republic—should cry its protest from the soil of this beautiful State, from all the thirteen original States, against this sin of a mistaken patriotism."

"Royal," she said, "for my sake, try to look at the matter in its true light. Be the man I believe you are. I love you. Do not leave me. Stay in Charleston and let me feel how proud I am of you. What tie should be dearer to you than that which binds you to the girl you love? Think me not unwomanly to speak thus. It is my heart that pleads, and would wrest you from the brink on which I can feel you are trembling."

"Bertha, would you tempt me to prove false to my duty——"

"Duty!" she said, drawing herself up. "You have said—nay, sworn that you love me. Of your own free will have you laid your heart at my feet, knowing that I am a daughter of the South. You cannot have been so blind as to think I would desert South Carolina even for—you. I repeat again, I love you, Royal, even as I love my people and their principles. What more can you exact of me? Your duty, then, is to remain here, by my side, to protect me, if need be,

with your life. I give you all I have to give—my heart. Is it not enough?"

"Yes, a thousand times yes," he cried, pressing her hand to his fevered lips; "and yet—oh, heavens, my country!"

"Your country should be my country—as mine should be yours."

As she spoke, a thin streak of fire curved in the distance from Fort Johnson, hovered an instant above Sumter, then broke in a brilliant flash.

It was the signal shell—the first gun of the war.

They both saw it.

"See," she said, with sudden enthusiasm, "Beauregard has spoken."

He stood trembling with the awful fear of the next moment upon his soul.

"Speak, Royal—my heart's beloved—speak!"

Several consecutive flashes of light spurted from Moultrie, and the quivering shells springing into the air, burst in succession above the ramparts of Sumter, encircling the waving folds of Old Glory in a halo of fire.

The sight started a new light in Royal Chetwood's eyes, and dissolved the spell that had held him.

"Desert that flag?" he cried. "Never!"

"Then," said Bertha, drawing from him and standing erect, "are we indeed strangers."

CHAPTER III.

BETRAYED AND BETRAYER.

After having been abroad the greater part of the night, or rather morning of the memorable 12th of April, Captain Trafton returned to his luxurious bachelor apartments in the fashionable section of Charleston a little before sunrise.

The roar of the batteries down the bay was sweet music to his soul, and in a measure soothed the bitter, rebellious passions aroused by the non-success of his love affair in which Bertha McVane so largely figured.

But his jealous resentment toward his more successful rival—Royal Chetwood—did not for a moment slumber.

His crafty heart had already devised means for thwarting the young Pennsylvanian, and he hugged the consolation to his breast that his revenge would be both sure and speedy.

His Satanic Majesty must have chuckled over such a compliant pupil, and should out of pure infernal ecstasy have smoothed the evil pathway the captain was treading; but not so; instead, he was preparing fresh obstacles and annoyances for his ready tool; which ought to be a sufficient warning for all inclined to put faith in so slippery a taskmaster.

Captain Trafton had scarcely divested himself of his coat and vest with a view of seeking a few hours' slumber, when his quick eye descried an envelope on the bureau addressed to himself.

The writing seemed a bit familiar, and yet he did not immediately recognize his correspondent.

He tore the covering off the epistle, and glanced quickly down the paper for the signature.

It was plain enough, and when we say that the two words gave him a great and unexpected shock, we are putting it very mild indeed.

With a face as white as the ceiling above him, he crushed the note in his grasp with an oath.

"She here—in Charleston—at this moment! Great Heaven! What shall I do?"

After a few minutes he became sufficiently composed to read the communication.

It ran thus:

"EZRA:—Convinced at last that you had basely deserted the woman whose devotion you betrayed, I found means, which I need not explain, of uncovering your track. You meant to be well rid of me, since you have tired of the plaything of an idle hour; but a wronged and desperate woman is not so easily cast aside. For myself, the future holds naught but the bitterness of death, since the man I so sincerely and blindly loved is unworthy of the heart so easily won. But I now demand and will exact justice. I have discovered your real name and position in society. Unless you would endure exposure of a kind which no honorable man could bear, the public exposure of your villainy, come to me at once. I have to say that which must be said.

"6 Laurel place. MARY BLUFF."

"In the name of all that's infernal, how could she have made this fatal discovery? I must see her, that's plain, else ruin will follow. Be it so. I must compromise this matter. If it's money she wants, the affair can be easily arranged, but if she insists on recognition—bah! that's impossible. If she prove unreasonable—well, I must seek some effectual way of silencing her importunities—and that at once."

With this pleasant reflection, the captain partly disrobed, and threw himself upon the bed.

Some men beset as Ezra Trafton was would have courted sleep in vain.

Not so the captain.

His attitude toward women had been particularly unsavory, and the constant fondling of an evil tendency had so benumbed his conscience that anything in the nature of remorse for his many delinquencies made but a feeble impression upon that calloused organ—his heart.

It is said that no man is so bad but he may at some time, however unwillingly, be surprised into betray-

ing at least one spark of the divine nature implanted in every human breast, if the subtle chord can be but touched.

Captain Trafton was yet to experience that sensation.

For the present we can only aver that his sonorous breathing testified that his conscience and his material self seemed to be on excellent terms.

In the meanwhile, as morning grew apace, the excitement in and about the city mounted to fever heat.

The *Mercury* and other daily papers issued extras with flaring head-lines and lurid descriptions of the latest aspects of the bombardment.

The citizens of Charleston flocked to every available point whence a view of the scene transpiring down the bay could be observed.

Business was at a stand-still.

The one topic engrossed the public mind.

The issue was readily discounted, the only questions were how long would it last, and what effect would the assault on Fort Sumter have on the North.

Would it serve to bring the country to its senses?

Would the Federal Government recognize at last the great fact of a completed and successful revolution?

Was the madness which inspired it to depart with this single paroxysm?

Was this to be a drama of a single act, or merely the prologue to a most momentous military tragedy?

The forts and impromptu batteries surrounding Sumter maintained a steady and uninterrupted fire all day.

The beleaguered garrison returned the compliment after an intermittent fashion, for they were sadly at disadvantage in the fray.

The smoke rolled away seaward in great clouds.

Several times it was noticed that flames had broken

out within those massive walls of granite, and the onlookers more than half expected to be treated at any moment to a brief Vesuvian eruption, for a large supply of powder was stored in Sumter.

The bombardment was at its height when Captain Trafton stepped from his lodgings into the deserted street.

He was dressed with his usual faultless care, but not in his regimentals this time.

There was no sign of care or perplexity upon his smoothly shaven countenance.

The mask that hid it all was charmingly serene.

He directed his steps toward the aristocratic hotel where it was his custom to take his meals.

It was just noon, and the captain was not much behind his usual breakfast hour.

He had some difficulty in being served, but under the unusual circumstances this was excusable.

The place was practically deserted by the customary habitues.

Captain Trafton ate his breakfast with surprising deliberation, and astonished the few waiters who had not deserted the establishment by going through the morning paper with the utmost *sang froid.*

This was all the more incomprehensible, as he was known to be one of the most violent partisans in the aggressive movements on foot.

If the captain was impassive and irresponsive to a degree, he had his reasons.

Every man is presumed to know his own mind, and Ezra Trafton had never been accused of not knowing his.

It was one o'clock when he left the hotel.

Half an hour later he turned the corner of Laurel Place and rang the bell at No. 6.

It was a quiet neighborhood, wearing a genteel and retired aspect.

It had once been fashionable, but fashion, like

everything else, has a penchant for forsaking the old quarters for the new.

But she usually leaves a shadow of her mantle behind; that's why Laurel Place had an air above the common, though many of the present householders were sadly out-at-the-elbows, so to speak, and were therefore much concerned in hiding the fact from public gaze.

That's why there were a good many lodgings to let in Laurel place.

And No. 6 was a very fair sample of its neighbors.

The bell was evidently grudgingly answered by a young woman of Hibernian lineage.

Was a lady named Bluff stopping there?

She was.

Could the captain see her?

The servant didn't know, but she would find out; so Ezra Trafton was piloted into the little front parlor.

It was an oblong apartment, yet showing traces of former finery in the way of faded decorative work, and rusty-looking panels; but to the æsthetic eye of the captain, it was undisguisedly shabby, and he shuddered as his sense of smell was assailed by certain odors of cooking that sifted up from the region below.

He was not kept waiting long.

In a few moments Mary Bluff, looking very pale and constrained of manner, entered the room.

Ezra rose from his chair and bowed in a conventional way, as though even this bit of politeness cost him an effort.

"You have come," she said, coldly.

"I have come, though for what purpose I know not. To have a woman's reproaches, I suppose," he replied, stiffly.

"I have asked you here, Ezra Trafton, or Ezra Anderson, as until the last few days you were known to me, to say that, having unmasked your perfidy, and knowing now your true name and position, I in-

tend to be recognized as your wife—publicly before the world."

"Nothing can be gained by our reunion," he said, slowly.

"Our reunion!" she said, bitterly; "I care not for that. I could never live with you again. The past is dead as though it never existed. I am a Virginian, accustomed to regard honor as man's noblest possession. You have shattered that idol as respects yourself; that I could love—fondly, passionately, unreservedly, you have long since discovered. That I can hate and despise the man who employed the artifice of an evil nature to ruin me—you have yet to learn."

Captain Trafton shivered under his cool exterior.

This calm, impassive arraignment of his villainy was something he had not bargained for.

He had expected tears, reproaches, the almost mute appeal of a meek and unprotected woman.

He was nonplused, and for a few minutes a deep silence ensued.

It had been his intention to temporize, to cajole, to threaten if necessary.

Now the cowardly element of his nature forced its way to the surface, and for the moment he was bewildered and hesitated how to proceed.

"I have an imperative reason for insisting on my recognition, however," she continued, with resolute mien. "My own right I might resign, but I cannot resign the right of your son and heir."

The effect of these words was tremendous.

The captain sprang to his feet, fairly livid with rage and consternation.

"Woman," he exclaimed, hoarsely, "what infernal plot are you trying to spring upon me? Son, indeed? I have no son!"

"You have, Ezra Trafton," said Mary, also rising, and regarding him with a mixture of loathing and contempt; "*our* child was born six weeks ago."

"Woman, you lie!"

"I do not lie, Captain Trafton. You are the father of my child. I swear it—before Heaven!"

Mary Bluff raised her arm in solemn asseveration, and Ezra Trafton, convinced of the truth in spite of himself, sank back in his chair.

CHAPTER IV.

TWO IS COMPANY, BUT THREE IS A CROWD.

If ever there was a baffled, dismayed man, that person was Captain Trafton at that moment.

And Mary Bluff, like an accusing Nemesis stood darkly in the foreground.

Where now was Ezra's castle building in which Bertha McVane was the central figure?

Ruin and bitter disappointment stared him out of countenance unless——

His master, the devil, was at his elbow surely, for a dark, grim, desperate resolve developed itself upon this brain, where since the early morning but a shadowy negative of the purpose had existed.

"I have every proof needed of your villainy," said Mary Bluff. "The confession of the scoundrel who enacted the part of the minister. The acknowledgments of the two witnesses seduced by your money. Oh, it was a brave deed for a Southern gentleman to lend himself to, where a weak, confiding, unsophisticated woman was the object of his unbridled attainment. It was contemptible! It was criminal! *You* call yourself a part of our Southern chivalry! Is it not the boast of every true son of the South that a woman is by right and nature entitled to the pinnacle of respect and esteem? Yet you, unworthy scion of such a precious heritage, have dared to contaminate

the nest in which you were reared! Hark! You hear yonder guns? A million hearts are at this moment beating in unison with their thunder! A million men are ready to draw their swords for the defense of a principle! Are you worthy to take your place by their side? No! A man who can coolly and designedly wrong a woman is a coward who will shrink at the first emergency!"

Her voice smote Ezra's ears like the trumpet tone of an accusing angel.

He writhed under her innuendoes.

He ground his teeth impatiently as she hurled the anathema of her scorn upon his head.

And he knew he deserved it all.

He knew he was a villain.

Yet what scoundrel, polished though he be, is willing to accept the verdict his deeds merit?

"You are hard upon me," he said, at last, "and have taken me by surprise. I must have time to think. You will be home this evening, I suppose?"

There was a cold glitter in his eyes which, as his face was in the shadow, she did not notice.

"Yes," she said, simply, "I am always at home."

"I will call some time after dark. I will see what I can do, as you are so determined upon your course. It is a misfortune to me that you have sought me out. You have me on the hip, and like a woman," with a sneer, "you press your advantage."

The innuendo was not lost on Mary Bluff.

"It is worthy of you to scoff at what you are least capable of appreciating. You cannot forget that you had a mother, and that the taunt you cast on woman must also reflect on her."

"No more of this," he said, impatiently, taking up his hat. "I will call to-night."

"And I will expect you," she said, with marked significance.

The interview ended abruptly, and Captain Traf-

ton left No. 6 Laurel place in a mood that would have troubled his most intimate friend to analzye.

Whatever plans he had previously considered with the view of the present emergency he now proceeded to carry out.

His position was desperate, since the selfish ambition that dominated his life, permitted of no half measures.

The ruin of a pure, true woman he regarded merely as an indiscretion—one of those unavoidable foibles of a man of the world—which he was.

It was not his first crime against society; but it was the first that had reacted so unpleasantly against himself.

He had struck a snag.

Therefore there was only one course open to him.

It must be removed.

Money is a potent factor in the affairs of this world.

It is the Archimedian lever of the universe.

And Captain Trafton knew its value.

He had money, though not all his heart craved.

Were he successful in winning Miss McVane, his position, though tenable at present, would be assured.

As the son-in-law of the distinguished Southern politician, his social standing would be stamped with the "hall-mark" of the higher circles.

His character would receive a permanent gloss, and he could review with complaisance the piccadilloes of the past.

Thus his master, the Devil, poured flattering unction on his victim's soul, while he forged fresh chains for his undoing.

Captain Trafton went straight to the "Moultrie House," a private hotel in the semi-fashionable suburbs, whither he had sent a note earlier in the day, apprising a certain boon companion of his intended visit.

He was shown up to his friend's room, and found

that worthy smoking a cigar by the open window, and rather impatiently awaiting his appearance.

"Good-day, Major de Banyan."

"Happy to see you, Captain Trafton."

"You are enjoying yourself, major?"

"Faith, captain, it's a weakness I have, and one of the penalties of a good digestion."

"Of course," said Ezra, drawing up a chair. "I can easily see you're in prime condition."

"Thank you—I'm suffering from my usual good health. And now, please the pigs, may I inquire to what I am indebted for this distinguished honor?"

"Certainly, major; I have pressing need for your services this evening, for which I intend, as on former occasions, to offer you a handsome gratuity."

The major gave a low whistle.

"Oh, is that the way the wind blows. By me soul, you couldn't have called at a more fitting opportunity, as my exchequer is most alarmingly empty, and the landlord is pressing me for his odious account."

"Are you ready to litsen to me?"

"Faith, I'm all ears."

Captain Trafton at once entered into a guarded revelation of the cause leading to his embarrassment, and then proceeded more minutely to outline the means he proposed to take in order to relieve himself of the unenviable contingency that overshadowed him.

"By the piper, it's no small complication ye are mixed up in this time; but there's nothing like taking the bull by the horns, d'ye mind. A private asylum is the very thing to my mind to suit the case. The lady will be well cared for as long as ye pay the footing. As one of her majesty's late regimental surgeons, faith I think I can easily certify that the lady's out of her mind. Of course, it'll be necessary for me to see her, in order that me conscience may rest easy in the matter, and the certificate be signed all right

and proper. You'll take her to Doctor Meigg's, of course, on the old stone turnpike?"

"That is my intention."

"Shure they'll be no trouble at all, at all."

"I should hope not."

"Rest your mind easy, my boy; the matter is as good as settled. Faith, I've always been told that I was the divil among the girls, but I take my hat off in your presence, the more power to you."

It is to be presumed that the captain felt flattered at the compliment; what man does not when congratulated upon his conquests among the sex?

Major de Banyan produced a bottle of choice whisky, and a box of cigars, and the delectable pair completed the details of their little scheme much to their own satisfaction.

Perhaps they would not have been so exhilarated had they known that every word of their unguarded plot had been overheard by the occupant of the next room, whose window being also open, enabled him to hear what was not intended for a third pair of ears.

The fact of the matter was, that nearly everybody seemed to be so occupied with the bombardment of Fort Sumter, that the pair of plotters quite overlooked the most ordinary precautions; indeed, it was by the merest accident that the adjoining apartment was occupied; as the guest, none other than our hero, Royal Chetwood, had through the perversity of the hotel clerk missed the train by which he had intended to go North.

But such is life.

It is the little things cropping up most unexpectedly that sometimes decide the fate of nations, as well as rule the destiny of man, and bring his best laid plans to naught.

CHAPTER V.

WHAT THE MOON SAW ON THE OLD STONE PIKE.

"I'll have a carriage here at eight, sharp, major," said Captain Trafton.

"All right, me boy; I'll be ready. And now if you've funds handy, faith, I'd like to touch you for fifty, just to ease me mind, and the landlord's importunities."

"There you are, Major de Banyan. I'll hand you a check for the balance when the little affair is settled."

"Truth, you're an angel without wings, me jewel; and here's a long life to you for a fascinating Don Juan as ye are."

The bumper was drank, and the pair of military scoundrels—and Major de Banyan showed himself to be a thorough-paced one—quitted the room.

It was half-past eight when a carriage rattled into Laurel place and stopped at No. 6.

Two men occupied the vehicle; only one, however, alighted.

He walked up the steps, rang the bell, and was admitted.

Mary Bluff was seated in the dimly lighted parlor, waiting for Captain Trafton.

And he had come.

"Mary," he said, having, Judas-like, changed his tactics since the former interview, "I have pondered over this matter since I was here this afternoon. Your accusing words have sunk deep into my heart, and I humbly confess that I have, indeed, acted to you the part of a villain. Forgive me if you can—I can never excuse myself."

The wronged woman, who was not prepared for this sudden change of front, regarded him with great surprise.

"Why should there be a feud and hatred between us?" he continued. "You once loved me."

"I did, and your perfidy has wrecked the hearts of my parents, and sent my brother from home, Heaven knows where."

"You have asked me to repair this wrong," he said, in a sanctimonious tone, "so far as to protect our child."

The last word seemed to choke him, but his acting was so natural that it passed for an excess of emotion.

"I am willing to do more. I will take you this very night to my mother's, acknowledge in her presence your rights as my wife and the mother of my—child, and claim for you her protection, until we shall have been united by a minister of the gospel."

"You will do this—to-night?" said Mary, a gleam of pleasure in her eyes.

"I will. If you do not wish to live with me, at least our son will be formally recognized, and I will settle sufficient money upon you both to provide for your maintenance and his education."

"Are you really speaking the truth—or am I dreaming?" she said.

"I mean exactly what I say."

"Oh, man—man, do not deceive me in this, as you value your soul's salvation. Think for a moment what I have suffered! Try to realize the horror of my abandoned situation! Then you may understand why I hesitate in accepting too quickly this gleam of happiness—the first in many months. Swear to me, in the name of your Creator, that this is the truth!"

"I swear!" said Ezra Trafton.

But he shivered as he took the unhallowed oath.

"Then I believe you. I will try to forgive you. Indeed, I will, for the sake of our child."

"The carriage is waiting, Mary," he said, uneasily, for this phase of villainy brought the cowardly blood into his cheeks.

"I will be ready in a moment."

And she left the room to prepare herself.

"Ugh!" exclaimed the captain, when alone, wiping the perspiration from his forehead. "It takes the nerve of the old boy to go through such a scene. Only the desperate nature of my predicament could have sustained my self-possession. "Well," he continued, pacing the room, "the devil helps those who help themselves, I fancy, and may he help to the end is my fervent wish."

In ten minutes Mary Bluff was ready to go with her recreant lover.

They passed quickly down the steps and Ezra opened the carriage door.

"There is some one here," said Mary, holding back with one foot on the carriage step.

"Oh, yes," said the captain, hastily, "it is a family connection. Major de Banyan, this is my wife."

"Faith, madame, it gives me great pleasure to know you," said the military gentleman, gallantly.

Reassured, Mary entered the carriage and faced the ex-army surgeon.

The captain, after speaking to the driver, jumped into the vehicle and shut the door.

So far the conspiracy was extremely successful.

Let us leave them and retrace our steps a bit.

As soon as Royal Chetwood heard the plotters leave the adjoining room and go down stairs, he drew a long breath and exclaimed:

"Well, of all the infernal bits of deviltry hatched in this world, that's the most despicable. I should forever despise myself if I did not interfere to bring confusion upon those scoundrels, and save the poor lady whose fate is involved in such a mean conspir-

acy. Pretty officers they are, indeed," with a sneer, "Captain—I didn't catch his name, and Major de Banyan. I presume he's some cashiered officer of the British Army. What shall I do? Things are at such sixes and sevens here to-day, that I can scarcely ask any of these people, whom I now regard in the light of enemies, to take a hand in this matter. There are but two of them, and I fancy one honest, determined man is more than their match. I'll arm myself and essay the adventure alone. Heaven will surely assist the side of justice and humanity."

Royal Chetwood looked every inch the man he was.

Handsome, stalwart, athletic—a true specimen of nature's nobleman.

Well might beauty's eye be attracted to him.

Young, it is true, but none the less able to rise to the level of any emergency.

On a particularly lonesome stretch of the old stone turnpike leading north from Charleston, about the hour of eleven, stood a broad-shouldered young man, his attention strained in the direction of the city.

The reader will easily recognize the hero of this story—Royal Chetwood.

His horse was tethered close by.

The bright early moon hung like a silver crescent in the blue ether.

The monotonous croak of the frog was to be heard on all sides.

Far away, mellowed by distance, came the deep booming of cannon, and the sky in that direction was aglow as with a fearful conflagration.

There was scarcely any breeze, and the trees lining the road-way cast ghostly shadows.

Nature seemed to cower under the lurid gloom of the war-spectre's eye.

Hark!

The sound of horses' hoofs and the rattle of carriage wheels came faintly to Chetwood's ear.

He placed his hand in his coat-pocket and drew forth a revolver, which he cocked, and then returned to its hiding-place.

The time for action had arrived.

Nearer and nearer came the vehicle.

A turn in the road presently brought it into view, rolling along at a sharp pace.

Two minutes more it was close at hand, and Royal stepped boldly out on the road-way.

"Stop!"

The driver pulled his team up short.

A head was thrust from one of the openings of the carriage, and a voice demanded the cause of the sudden stoppage.

A stifled scream hastened the climax.

In an instant Chetwood stepped up beside the conveyance.

"Is Major de Banyan here?" he said.

"Faith, I am," replied that worthy, putting out his head. "Who the divil are you, and what do you want?"

"Step outside, if you please."

"Outside, is it? 'Pon my honor, but that's a cool way of introducing yourself. I don't know you. Drive on!"

"Stop!" exclaimed Royal, sternly. "I have business with this gentleman."

"The divil you have. You seem to know me, but, by the hoofs of Balaam's donkey, you have the best of me, faith. What do you want? Speak quick!"

"Come out of the carriage."

"By—— I don't know as I will," said Major de Banyan, suddenly thrusting a revolver into Chetwood's face.

Royal, quick as thought, thrust the weapon aside, and it exploded harmlessly. Then he turned the han-

dle of the door, threw it open, and, with a lightning grasp, dragged the major headlong from his seat.

Captain Trafton was holding Mary Bluff tightly against the back of the carriage.

Royal seized him with all the strength of his muscular arms, and pulled both out of the vehicle, catching the lady in time to save her from a bad fall.

"Now you pair of scoundrelly abductors make yourselves scarce, for your game is up!"

Captain Trafton was fairly cowed by the unexpected attack.

He was a man of no great personal valor.

But the major was of different mold.

Rascal, indeed, he was, but no coward.

He had proved his intrepidity on many a desperate field during the Crimean War.

Royal was quick to perceive that he was an ugly antagonist.

Our hero had hazarded his chances upon the first surprise.

In this he had partially succeeded, but the adventure was not over by any means.

"Get into the carriage, madame, quick!" he said.

As he spoke, Ezra Trafton, crouching on the ground, drew his pistol and fired.

A heart-rending scream mingled with the report, and Mary Bluff dropped across the steps of the vehicle, for the captain's nervousness had disarranged his aim, and our hero stood unharmed.

"The divil!" exclaimed the major, aghast. "You've hit her, man."

Then he deliberately covered Royal.

Chetwood raised his weapon at the same instant, and the two reports were as one.

For a second, as the smoke cleared, both men appeared to be unhurt; then Royal lurched forward, fell at full length, and lay motionless on the turnpike.

"Faith, I was sure I couldn't miss the blackguard,"

said the major, breaking the silence. "He isn't the first one I've pinked."

Which was the truth, for Major de Banyan was a noted duelist, and a dead shot.

"Hark! There's a horseman coming down the pike. Rouse up, man; we must be off, faith! It won't do to be caught here. This woman is stone dead, and will be after bothering you no more. Your shot found her heart."

The major, who was a man of action, put the body into the carriage, and hustled Captain Trafton in before him.

"Back to the city, you devil!" he shouted to the driver, "and whip up like the old boy!"

The jehu was only too glad to obey.

The vehicle whirled quickly about, and was soon tearing down the road like mad.

The oncoming horseman had evidently heard the shots, for he had quickened his pace to a dead gallop.

He drew rein beside the motionless figure in the road, and dismounted.

"By the Lord!" he exclaimed, as he turned Royal over on his back, and the moon shone cold upon the marble features, "there has been murder done here, or my name's not Moses Bluff!"

CHAPTER VI.

A TERRIBLE CATASTROPHE.

The assault on Fort Sumter seems to have been designed by Providence to rouse the patriotic sentiment of the country to an enthusiastic determination of sustaining the Constitutional Government and its territorial integrity at every hazard and whatever cost.

The attack upon the Sixth Massachusetts regiment by a frenzied mob in the streets of Baltimore appealed

to a deeper sentiment and tempered enthusiasm with a stern resolution, like that which knit the brows of the people, and compressed their lips, on the evening of the fight of Concord and Lexington in 1776.

President Lincoln had already issued his call to the Governors of the States in sympathy with the North for 75,000 men to serve for three months.

And the call was answered with a readiness and spirit that clearly showed the temper of the people.

From that hour events followed one another with startling rapidity, gradually ascending in the scale of importance as the warlike operations broadened; and before many weeks the entire country was wide awake to the fact that a war, that would be far reaching in its effects, was upon the nation.

During the first few weeks of the struggle, when both sides were, we may say, girding their loins, for the first desperate grapple, the hero of this story, Royal Chetwood, whom Major de Banyan and Captain Trafton had left for dead on the old stone turnpike, was lying in the City Hospital at Charleston.

Moses Bluff, the brother of the murdered victim of the captain's sensualism, had, as we have already seen, found his inanimate body on the spot where he fell.

Finding that the young man's heart was still faintly beating, he had carefully brought him into the city and to the hospital.

For more than a week, Royal's life was despaired of.

The bullet had passed through his body, just above the heart, and the wound was of the most dangerous character.

Thanks to a robust constitution and the best of medical treatment, he slowly rallied, but for a long time looked the mere ghost of his former self.

Moses Bluff, who had traced his sister to Charleston, divided his time between his search for Mary, of

whose fate he was ignorant, and the young Pennsylvanian, in whom he had taken a large and increasing interest.

There was another visitor also.

Bertha McVane.

She had learned of his condition through the papers.

They had published a sensational account of the shooting as a most mysterious affair, in which nothing was known but the identity of the victim.

The daughter of the South Carolina Senator found on calm reflection that it was no easy matter to relinquish her regard—the strong attachment of a maiden's first love—for her handsome lover, from whom she had parted that eventful night in a fit of pique and anger because he put his loyalty to the Stars and Stripes before his allegiance to her.

When she learned that he lay dying, as it was supposed, at the City Hospital, she put every consideration aside, and, like the true woman she was at heart, went to him.

But it was days before she was permitted to see him, and then, struggling with the delirium of a disordered fancy, he could not recognize her.

Before he became sufficiently rational to understand what was going on about him, Bertha was obliged to go to Montgomery with her mother, as the Senator had taken an important duty upon his shoulders in the interest of the new Confederate States.

And thus a reconciliation, which surely would have taken place, was indefinitely postponed.

Royal Chetwood was convalescent when Moses Bluff, after the most indefatigable exertion, finally learned of his sister's pathetic death and the real identity of her betrayer.

It is safe to say that but for Captain Trafton's disappearance from his usual haunts, and the impossibility of tracking him, after days of patient effort, alone

saved the scoundrel from the fate he richly deserved.

The two young men became much attached to one another.

Moses was grateful for the fruitless effort made by Royal to save his sister, and Chetwood felt that young Bluff had saved his life.

Although a Virginian, the brother of poor Mary Bluff confided to his friend that, like hundreds of others in the State that gave him birth, his sympathies were with the North.

Days before Royal was able to leave the hospital, it had been determined between them that they would enter the Federal Army together, and fight for the maintenance of the republic as a unit.

The two young men were on the eve of their journey northward when the news of the repulse of the National troops at Great Bethel, June 10th, reached Charleston.

The intelligence set the city wild with joy and enthusiasm.

Bonfires were lighted, and other demonstrations of an exuberant character were indulged in by the loyal spirits of the South.

The victory was all the more significant because it was officially known that the Unionists had outnumbered their opponents at least two to one.

Everybody looked upon this success as a favorable augury, and prophesied the speedy ending of the war.

But they reckoned without their host, and although the first really great battle of the Rebellion, which occurred during the ensuing month, resulted in a signal victory for the Confederate arms, and the almost total rout of the Federal Army, opening the road right up to Washington, the Nation's capital, and thus still further justifying the hopes of the Southern cause while it cast unspeakable gloom far and wide

throughout the North; the fratricidal struggle, after all, was only just beginning.

Royal and his friend Moses left Charleston on the morning of June 12th.

Their destination was Richmond, whence they proposed to make their way at the first favorable opportunity to Fortress Monroe.

As the trains hurried past smiling fields and prosperous-looking villages basking in the early summer sun, war seemed so utterly inconsistent with their surroundings as to tempt one to believe that it really must be only the waking recollection of a frightful dream, and not the stern reality of the hour.

They were by mutual consent silent upon the issue that concerned them, for the train was crowded, and watchful ears on the alert would have picked up any unfavorable word uttered by either.

More than half of the passengers were going northward to enlist under Beauregard and Johnson.

The greatest excitement pervaded the train.

The gay uniforms of an entire company of Charleston militia lent a color to the motley assemblage that was exhilarating to a degree.

But as a whole it had more of the features of a military picnic, omitting that important part of such an affair—the ladies—than the serious nature involved.

It was four o'clock in the afternoon, and the train was making good time along a more open part of the country, when a succession of ear-piercing screams from the locomotive startled everybody.

They were rounding a sharp curve on the line at the moment.

What followed those who escaped the disaster remembered to their dying day.

It was a tremendous concussion.

In the car occupied by Royal and Moses everything movable, human and inanimate, was thrown about helter-skelter.

A wild, chaotic scene of confusion.

A grinding, crunching sense of dissolution.

Car crashing into and over car.

Clouds of blinding, scalding steam.

Then screams of terror and agony, relapsing into the moans of the dying and the less fatally injured.

A pandemonium of horror!

CHAPTER VII.

TRAFTON ELUDES HIS NEMESIS.

The transition from a scene of hilarity and life to one of shocking confusion and death was as brief as it was unexpected.

A misplaced switch had been the cause of the terrible accident.

The north-bound passenger train, running on schedule time, had left the main track, and ran into a heavy freight train waiting on the siding for this very train to pass.

In a moment, without the slightest warning, more than two-score souls were hurried into eternity, while perhaps a hundred more lay about in the *debris* in all conditions of bodily laceration.

Royal Chetwood and his companion were among the few fortunate ones who in some miraculous manner escaped without a scratch.

When they crawled out of the ruins of their car, and recovered their startled senses, their eyes took in a scene of frightful confusion.

Both engines lay, fractured masses of iron, across the track, and enveloped in clouds of escaping steam.

The forward cars were piled on their sides on top of one another, shapeless wrecks. Indeed, some of them were little better than heaps of splintered wood

and twisted iron, wrenched into every conceivable shape.

Many of the slightly injured were pinned in the derailed cars unable to move, while others were painfully crawling out of the windows or through jagged openings in the wood-work—all more or less dazed by the catastrophe.

"This is awful!" exclaimed Royal, as he and Mose threw off their coats and started in to assist in the task of removing the injured and dead.

"Awful is no name for it," replied his companion. "Look at that poor fellow there. Think what he is suffering. We must get him out."

But it was no light job to move the wedged-in fragments of wood, and though volunteers were hurrying up from all directions, the task of getting at all the unfortunates seemed almost hopeless.

Royal and Moses succeeded in pulling out the man in question, but he was so desperately injured that he expired as they laid him upon the turf beside the track.

Their next essay was to tear open a hole in the roof of one of the cars to admit of the escape of several imprisoned passengers.

There was one, however, who could not get out, as he was held beneath a canopy of disjointed car-seats.

So Royal and Mose had to drop down into the car, and essayed to lift the obstruction so as to get at him.

It was evident he was alive, though they could not see the upper half of his body, or hear a single groan.

It seemed an age to Royal and his companion ere they pried the wood-work sufficiently apart to enable them to pull the body out.

To their great astonishment, the man sat up unaided, brushed the splinters from his bleeding countenance, and coolly remarked:

"Faith, upon my word as an officer and a gentle-

man, that was a narrow escape. But, plase the pigs, I'll be all right in the twist of a cat's tail, so I will."

Royal started from the shock of a sudden surprise. The tones were familiar to him.

He looked searchingly at the speaker.

"Major de Banyan, I think," he said, sternly.

"That's my name, sure enough," replied the ex-army surgeon, "but upon my honor, I can't place you for the life of me."

"Look again, sir."

"Faith, I'm looking," said the major, quite puzzled indeed, "where have I met you, my dear fellow?"

"Is it possible you don't recognize me?" said Royal.

"The divil a bit, were I to be hanged for it this blessed minute."

"Shall I assist your recollection?"

"It would be very obliging on your part, for by the staff of St. Patrick, I'd be willing to swear I never saw you before in my life."

"Your memory seems to be very much at fault," said Royal, "if you cannot identify the man you shot."

"The man I shot!" exclaimed the major. "It's joking you are, my dear boy."

"It was no joke for me. You left me for dead that night on the old stone turnpike road, some five weeks ago."

If our hero had expected to startle the major by this revelation, he was certainly disappointed.

"My dear fellow," exclaimed de Banyan, effusively, "I am heartily ashamed of myself, so I am. It was all a mistake, I assure you. I took you for a footpad, upon me soul, I did, until I saw your name mentioned in the *Mercury* next day. Any reparation I can offer—on the honor of a de Banyan, I stand ready to make."

"Major de Banyan, you waste your words," said Royal, with rising indignation. "I am fully aware of the purpose that brought you and that scoundrel, your friend, Captain Trafton——"

"Trafton!" exclaimed Moses Bluff, who had been a silent spectator on the scene. "Does this man know that villain?"

"Most intimately," said Royal.

"Sir," said Mose, addressing the major, in tones that bespoke his intense feeling, "if you know the present whereabouts of Captain Trafton, you will, if you have the commonest gratitude for what we have done for you to-day, reveal it to me."

"Faith, my dear sir, it would give me great pleasure to oblige you; but, faith, sir, I'm as much in the dark as to the cap'n's movements as yourself. It's three weeks since I laid eyes on him."

"Are you telling me the truth'?" exclaimed Moses, almost angrily.

"Do you doubt the word of an officer and a gentleman'?" said de Banyan, with real or assumed indignation.

"That man is a scoundrel!" said young Bluff, vehemently. "He ruined my sister, and her death lies on his guilty soul. I have sworn to avenge her, and will kill him on sight!"

"Faith, I'll not dispute your right to do as you think proper, but, when one takes the law into his own hands, the authorities are apt to make it unpleasant for him, do you mind?"

Here Royal interfered.

"Major de Banyan, shall we assist you out of the car?"

"Upon my word, you're very kind, so you are; but I'm not at all hurt, barring a few scratches that'll wear away."

"Since that is the case, there is work for us elsewhere, and I would suggest that any assistance you

can lend the injured would simply be a Christian act on your part."

"I never shirk a duty, sir," said the officer. "I trust we part friends."

"We can never be friends, Major de Banyan," replied Royal, coldly.

"As you will," answered the major, shrugging his shoulders.

A moment later the three were outside the car.

Royal and his friend hastened to offer their aid elsewhere, while the officer, tearing off his coat, made good his word.

An hour later a wrecking train came from the nearest large town, bringing a corps of doctors.

A large number of the more seriously injured of the passengers were put on board the cars and carried away for hospital treatment.

The work of clearing the track now began in earnest, and before dark the line was open.

The dead were stretched in rows upon the grass, and presented a solemn spectacle.

One could easily fancy, in the light of the military operations now in progress, that a battle had been fought in the vicinity.

The accident had delayed traffic many hours, and several trains were waiting to proceed up and down the road.

Royal and Moses got on board the first north-bound accommodation, and went on to the next town.

Here they put up for the night, and on the ensuing morning continued their journey to Richmond.

The closer they drew to the vicinity of the early operations of the war, the more portentous were the scenes and military preparations they saw on every hand.

Bodies of armed men hastily gathered together were frequetnly discovered marching along the country roads.

Excitement reigned everywhere.

The local papers were full of incidents of a martial character, and accounts of skirmishes, invariably favorable to the Confederate arms.

Virginia in the East, and Missouri in the West, were the chief grounds of military operations at this early stage of the conflict.

It was evident that General Beauregard, the chief in command of the Confederate forces in the first-named State, was leaving no stone unturned in his endeavors to whet the enthusiasm of the Confederate population.

His proclamations were scattered broadcast.

A printed copy of one was put into Chetwood's hand as the train was nearing Richmond.

That the Confederate commander was getting a ready response to his burning words for enlistment was very apparent.

Men were flocking about his standard from all parts of the South, and already he had gathered quite a considerable force, which he was busily organizing, drilling, and supplying with arms.

It was evening when the train rolled into the depot of the Confederate capital.

Royal and Moses went at once to one of the leading hotels and engaged a room.

After supper they strolled about the city and made cautious inquiries as to the mode of conveyance to some point whence they could transfer themseves beyond the pale of the new government.

This proved to be not too difficult of adjustment, and their plans were outlined accordingly, with a view of getting around every contingency likely to arise.

They then returned to their hotel.

As they were passing along the corridor on the second floor, a door opened, and a man in military attire

stepped from one of the rooms, pausing to bid some one not visible good-night.

As he turned away, Royal came face to face with him.

"Captain Trafton!" he exclaimed.

The words were hardly out of his mouth when Moses Bluff, with a wild cry, brushed by him and seized the man by the arms.

But Trafton had taken instant alarm, and endeavored to regain the room he had just quitted.

The result was that in the scramble that ensued both men fell to the floor.

Moses had but one purpose in view now that he had the man he wanted in his grasp.

He had no weapons about him, but a pair of strong hands upon a man's windpipe are apt to prove quite as effective in a close struggle.

The captain was no match for this avenger of a sister's wrong, but he was better prepared, inasmuch as he carried a pistol in his coat-pocket.

The noise of the affray quickly drew others to the scene; but before any one could interfere, or Royal Chetwood suspect his object, Trafton drew his revolver and discharged it in the breast of his assailant.

Moses relinquished his desperate hold with a groan and fell over upon the carpet, while the captain sprang to his feet and dashed rapidly down stairs.

CHAPTER VIII.

LOVE'S SACRIFICE.

Amid the excitement that ensued Chetwood raised his friend's head on his knee and begged some one to run for a doctor.

Mose was unconscious, and bled copiously from the wound inflicted by the bullet.

Royal was wild with anxiety, and stanched the flow of blood as best he could.

Every one wanted to know the cause that led to the shooting; but their inquiries were ungratified.

A surgeon rooming at the hotel was soon on the scene.

He examined the wounded man, and pronounced the injury dangerous, but not necessarily fatal.

Moses Bluff was carefully removed to an unoccupied room on the same floor, and the surgeon having brought his instruments, the bullet was probed for and removed.

Royal was then left in charge of the patient, who had been made as comfortable as his condition permitted.

It was many days before he was pronounced out of danger, and during this time Royal Chetwood never left the room except to snatch a hasty meal.

As for Captain Trafton, he was seen at the hotel no more.

The affair was a great mystery to the guests and attaches of the hotel, as Royal, the only one they judged to be conversant with the cause of the trouble, could not be induced to make any kind of an explanation.

The excitement of the hour easily diverted every one's attention from the incident, as all were expecting a decisive battle to be fought between the opposing armies on Virginia's soil.

This sanguinary event was not long delayed.

The evening of the day that Moses Bluff ventured out of doors for his first airing brought the intelligence of the decisive Confederate victory at Bull Run.

The news set Richmond wild with joy. The most extraordinary demonstrations were indulged in; all of which were viewed with feelings of despondency by our young friends so unfortunately isolated in the capital of the Confederacy.

Although the Federal forces that had invaded Virginia were badly whipped, and in full retreat toward Washington, the accounts of the battle were naturally grossly exaggerated.

The air was pregnant with all sorts of rumors. Southern sympathizers were now certain that the National Government was completely annihilated, and that as soon as the District of Columbia was occupied by General Beauregard, which was regarded as a foregone conclusion, an armistice would ensue, and the Confederacy would obtain every concession they had originally demanded.

That their cause was a just one was not for a single moment questioned.

This civil struggle had been started to sustain a principle, the principle would now obtain, peace must ensue, and the Southern Confederacy, as a separate government, would naturally be recognized by the powers of the earth.

England, on whose evident sympathy they relied, would take the initiative, and all Europe must of course fall in line.

No wonder the prospect was enticing.

But the South entirely miscalculated the feeling of the great mass of people constituting the bulk of the republic.

Defeat might sadden, but it could not cause them to yield one star from the glorious galaxy founded by the immortal Washington, and cemented by the blood of the Revolutionary patriots.

"Civil war is a sad thing to contemplate," said Royal, as he and his friend watched the excited throngs from the hotel window.

"It is deplorable," acquiesced Moses. "I fear we are only at the beginning of a most desperate struggle."

"I am convinced that the Confederacy will find they have bitten off more than they can chew, to use

the expression. One swallow doesn't make a summer, nor one defeat a war. The South must yield in the end; it is manifestly impossible for it to whip the North, and unless it can, its cause is hopeless. All things being equal, might is sure to win in the long run. No matter what temporary advantage they may secure, the Confederacy is clearly outclassed."

"We should have been in this fight but for my wound. This inaction worries me. I sorely regret that I have been the cause of detaining you here when you could have been actively engaged in upholding our country's flag."

"Don't speak of it, my dear friend," said Royal. "My first duty is to the man who saved my life."

"You have more than repaid the debt," said Mose, pressing his hand.

"Indeed, I have not."

"It was in my poor sister's defense you received your wound. Think you I can ever forget that? It was a noble, disinterested act to face those scoundrels alone. Few men would have run the risk. Though a Northern man, you have all the chivalry that flows in the veins of a Southern gentleman. I am proud of your friendship—of your companionship."

"A truce to this, Moses. I appreciate your regard, and feel equally honored in knowing you. But this is no time for mutual admiration. Let us talk of our country. Let Pennsylvania and Virginia clasp hands across the chasm and swear never to rest until our glorious Union is once more intact—an example for all nations to copy."

Fervently the young men grasped each other's hand, and silently registered their mutual resolve.

"I think," said Moses, "it is well that we separate for a while at least."

"Separate!" exclaimed Royal.

"Yes. I have been thinking over the matter for a week past. I have planned to return to the old home.

It is but just that my poor father and mother should be relieved of the uncertainty of my sister's fate. Her death will bow them down with grief, but at least they will know that she, poor child, is at rest, and it is better that my lips should soften the intelligence, than that they should casually learn the full horror of the tragedy from other sources."

"You are right, Moses," said his friend.

"I then intend to raise a troop of my neighbors, for most of my intimate associates are loyal to Old Glory, and will take the field at once."

"Well," said Royal, "I will not demur, though I regret the necessity that we must part. However, we shall meet again, for as soon as I can assure my own family that I have not been gobbled up down at Charleston, I shall enlist and go to the front."

And so it was settled.

After supper that night Royal chanced to wander into the ladies' parlor, possibly with the view of glancing out upon the main thoroughfare which the windows of this room commanded.

As he laid his hand upon the heavy damask curtains he became aware of the presence of a lady standing in their shadow.

"I beg your pardon," he said, and was about to withdraw, when a flash of light from a freshly started bonfire lighted up their countenances.

"Miss McVane!" he exclaimed, in surprise.

"Mr. Chetwood!"

Her voice was low and somewhat constrained.

"This is unexpected," he said, gently. "But it is not my intention to intrude upon you."

"Stay," she said, with a slight gesture. "We meet under changed circumstances, Roy—Mr. Chetwood. Why are you in Richmond—at this time?"

"Because my journey North was interrupted by a sad accident that happened to a friend—I might almost say brother."

She did not immediately reply.

"May I ask what brings you, too, to Richmond?"

"I and my mother accompanied the Senator, my father, who was summoned by Mr. Davis, to fill an important post under our new government."

Another pause ensued.

These two young people were evidently embarrassed by the same recollection.

The events of the last few weeks had made a great change in the lives of each.

They had been drawn unconsciously to look upon each other as dearer than brother and sister—in a word, they loved as only two impassioned youthful natures can love.

Yet while the avowal and the reply had scarcely grown cold on either lip, a gulf had suddenly opened between them, with the first gun fired at Fort Sumter.

A divided patriotism, like an impalpable presence, interposed, even as it came between father and son, brother and brother, in many a Southern home, thus bringing the awful element of fratricide into the war.

"It were perhaps unmanly in me to call up the past," said the young man, breaking the silence that had grown painful to both, "but I have not forgotten —nay, I can never forget, that for one brief instant —I knew the bliss of your love. Is that love now dead? Is there no hope for me in the future?"

"Hope!" she echoed. "Yes, if you reconsider the words you uttered. If you give up the cause to which I am opposed with all the warmth of my Southern soul. Hear me out," she said, as he made a gesture of despair. "Would I, loving you as I admit, ask you to do what I for a moment conceived to be dishonorable? No, Royal, else were I undeserving of your esteem and affection. I am not a foolish girl. I am a woman fully informed and associated with the issues involved in this conflict between my people and yours. It is not the question of a day or a month,

This steadily pursued policy of encroachment upon the liberties of one section of the country by the mistaken assumption of the other, which unfortunately held the balance of power, has been going on for years. I resent it with all my heart—with all my love for my native soil. I feel that we are waging a just war in resisting unfriendly aggression. Think what it is to me to see your hand raised against us. If wives throughout the Confederacy stand ready to sacrifice their husbands, and mothers their sons, I at least can sacrifice my love, though it break my heart."

"Bertha," he replied, in a sad voice, "the day will come when you will see the folly of this argument. I had hoped that perhaps you might—but, there, I see it is useless for me to pursue a topic that is painful to us both. I love you—I shall always love you. If it be my destiny to fall in defense of the flag I reverence, my last thought will be of you. Farewell. If we never meet again, at least think of me kindly—it is the most I dare expect."

"Will nothing change you, Royal?" she said, with a sob.

"Nothing that reflects on the Stars and Stripes. Nothing—not even you."

And thus they parted.

CHAPTER IX.

BURN AND DESTROY.

A puff of white smoke.

The sullen roar of a distant cannon.

This was enough to announce to the inhabitants of the beautiful valley of the Shenandoah that "Cavalry Sheridan" was let loose, and that the war would now be carried to their very doors.

Early had been down the valley, and for a time seemed to have matters all his own way.

Grant had uttered the magic words, "Go in!" and the Confederates found in Sheridan, on the offensive, a far different man than Sheridan on the defensive.

The sullen roar of Federal cannon announced, on this September morning, the fact that the great cavalry leader was on the war-path once more.

Many of the inhabitants of this richest of Virginia valleys had been living in comfort, giving aid to the Confederacy while professing loyalty to the Union.

With barns stored with wheat and hay, living on the fat of the land unmolested, the Southern sympathizers were a comparatively happy people.

What cared they for the Union?

They did not respect the cause; neither did they fear the defenders of the flag who passed them by unmolested.

But this state of affairs could not last.

Many Unionists were brutally murdered by bands of bushwhackers, who received the protection of the inhabitants.

Sheridan was not the man to permit such outlawry without an effort to crush it.

War is cruel, but these people had not yet felt any of its hardships. It was high time some of the severities of war should be visited upon the valley of the Shenandoah.

Boom!—boom!—boom!

Puffs of white smoke rose above the trees and went floating away over the hills and vales.

It is Federal cannon that speaks.

Where is Early that he permits the onward movement of this rash young Union general?

Flying up the valley!

Whirled from one point to another by the victorious Sheridan and his men.

A pretty red farm-house nestles under the shadow of a frowning hill.

Back of the house a wide field, with a few negro cabins, and an immense barn, filled with grain and hay.

A brook glides in serpentine winding across the road, and loses itself in a beautiful grove behind the house.

Over this creek a narrow bridge.

This is one of the best roads in the valley, although as yet few of the blue-coated invaders have passed the farm-house in question.

The roar of the distant artillery has brought the inmates of the house to the gate, where they stand listening to the sounds of approaching battle.

A trio of interesting people.

And old man and his wife—both silver-haired, and rapidly descending the hill of life—not unpleasant looking people, yet bitterly disloyal.

Beside the two, leaning against the low board fence, is a handsome young woman—a Southerner in every look and movement.

Tall and slender, with heavy coils of black hair, and eyes large, black, fathomless—gentle at times, yet capable of glowing with a lurid passion that would carry all before it. This was Bertha McVane, from South Carolina, here on a visit at the home of her uncle and aunt, in the beautiful valley of the Shenandoah.

The boom of distant cannon on this September morning had called the three without.

It was an ominous sound, and brought an uneasy feeling to the hearts of the old couple.

"That is the artillery, uncle."

"It is, Bertha. I expect a battle of magnitude is in progress down the valley."

"It is glorious!" cried Bertha, her olive cheek flushing, a deep glow filling her eyes. "Early will

send the Federals back to the Potomac faster than they come."

"Ah, my child, you are over enthusiastic. There is grave danger to the Southern cause in Virginia. Sheridan now leads the Yankees; a most desperate fighter indeed, and merciless as well."

"Sheridan, the Union cavalry commander? I have heard of him. But I have faith to believe that our brave Early will put his army to flight."

"I hope so; but I fear the worst."

It was a serious face, one actually white with alarm that Bertha McVane looked into then.

"Uncle Orvin, don't worry. Even if the Yankees should happen to defeat our brave men, no harm will come to you—a non-combatant."

"Perhaps not."

This was all that Orvin Clymore would say then.

Of what use to burden the young mind of his pretty niece with his worst fears.

"Look! some one comes, uncle."

A cloud of dust appeared to the north, then the sound of clattering hoofs fell on their ears.

"Come in, Bertha; they are Yankees."

A squad of Union cavalry dashed forward into view, their accoutrements jingling as they rode.

"No, Uncle Orvin," she cried. "I have a curiosity to look upon a live Yankee."

And Bertha McVane refused to move from her position at the fence.

A minute later the troop—a score of well-mounted men—drew rein in front of the farm-house.

A lieutenant, with an incipient mustache, was in command of the party.

"Hello, old man! How's your health?"

"My health is good," answered the Virginian, who was anxious to avoid all seeming offense.

"You do look fat; in good condition, I vow—fat enough to kill; eh, boys?"

A rude laugh went through the troop at this sally.

"Lieutenant, look at that girl."

One of the men thus addressed the young officer in a low tone.

But he had no need to call the officer's attention, since that worthy was already made aware of the presence of Bertha McVane.

Beautiful as a goddess, with flaming eyes, and cheeks burning with indignation, the girl stood looking into the young lieutenant's face.

"A pretty secessionist," he said, laughingly. "If I thought Captain Ray wouldn't hear of it, I'd have some fun with this impertinent maid."

"I have not been misinformed," finally spoke the girl. "Yankees are mudsills in very truth."

The lieutenant laughed rather immoderately at this rather spiteful remark from Miss McVane.

"So you have learned the trick of your elders, Southern statesmen, and use a term that is very expressive, to say the least. If I should retort by calling you a clay-eater or dough-face, you'd be indignant, wouldn't you?"

To this no reply was vouchsafed.

"Come, Bertha, we will go in now and allow these gentlemen to pass on," said the uncle, in a mild tone.

His wife was already moving toward the house.

"Go in, by all means," cried the lieutenant. "Of course you are a Union man?"

"I have no political opinions just at present," answered Orvin Clymore.

"A very safe plan, but it won't work to-day. We're engaged in rooting out secession in the Shenandoah Valley, my friend. Boys, we'll see what yonder barn contains."

Quickly the troopers leaped their horses into the garden, crushing the board fence, trampling flower-beds and shrubbery as they swept on past the house toward the barn.

"What will they do, uncle?"

Bertha asked the question with bated breath.

"Burn and destroy!" groaned the old man. "Sheridan is laying waste the country on every hand."

"But this is worse than barbarianism!" cried Bertha, her Southern blood in a flame at once. "Uncle Orvin, have you no arms?"

"Oh, yes; but what can one man do against twenty?" groaned Orvin Clymore.

The Union cavalry troop halted in front of the large barn not many rods from the house.

It required but a brief examination to show that a large store of wheat, corn, and hay lay at their mercy.

It seemed a pity to destroy so much that was valuable, but it could not be carried away to serve the cause of the Union, and if left, would feed the enemy, and give them nerve and life to fight for the Southern flag.

The rich granaries must not be left to feed that cause; so Sheridan had resolved to lay them waste.

If, by destroying that which would otherwise feed Confederate armies and horses, the war was brought to a termination a month sooner, then would thousands of valuable lives be saved, and what was seeming cruelty, would, in reality, prove an act of real benevolence.

The party led by the Federal lieutenant was but one of many out destroying property.

Sheridan was indeed to prove a besom of destruction to the smiling valley of the Shenandoah.

Those men who had lived in peace and plenty, cursed the flag, and filled their coffers, while raising grain for Southern armies, were now to suffer in their property at least for their disloyalty.

Other men, true to the Union and the flag of their fathers, had not only lost their fortunes, but their

lives, their families either murdered or driven from home in penury and want.

Either side of the picture was bad enough; but little less could be expected during the reign of a merciless civil war, which, in its magnitude, dwarfed all other wars of the kind, either ancient or modern.

"The barn's chuck-full, lieutenant."

"Apply the match, boys; we won't delay here a great while. From the sounds this morning, I judge that Early is making a stand. We must get back to the front to-day."

"In the name of justice, hold!"

A clear, bell-like voice fell on the ears of the Union troopers as they were about to apply the match to Orvin Clymore's barn.

"That girl again!" ejaculated the lieutenant, as the slender, yet graceful figure of Bertha McVane once more confronted the trooper.

Behind her, and a little way off, stood Orvin Clymore, leaning against a small tree, watching the troopers, with white face and trembling limbs.

It was hard to see his property go, and he was almost prostrated at the thought.

Bertha, with her strong mind, stronger really than that of her uncle, refused to remain quiet while the work of the incendiary was being done.

"What the duse are you out here for, miss?" growled the young lieutenant, rather sharply.

"Because I have a right to be here," retorted the girl, bluntly. "You and your men are the intruders. You have no right to destroy this property, the property of a poor old man, who has lost all but honor in this war."

"Lost all!" sneered the officer. "Why, bless you, miss, there's hundreds of dollars' worth of grain in this barn, and two splendid horses. I guess he'll think he's poor after we leave. You may thank your

stars, my girl, that we don't destroy the house you live in."

"It would be of a pattern with other acts of the Yankee general," retorted Bertha, who was losing her temper, and was likely to lose all chance for reconciliation by thus speaking her true feelings.

The lieutenant laughed.

"Fire the barn, boys!"

"Hold! I entreat you to spare my uncle's property!" pleaded Bertha.

It was a most beautiful face the maiden turned toward those rough riders of Torbert.

They had met with just such pleading before, and were becoming hardened to it.

"Never mind the girl," cried the officer, slipping from the saddle; "I will take care of her. Do your duty, boys; we must be on the move."

A few steps only did Lieutenant Snyder take toward the Southern girl.

A pistol flashed in the officer's face.

"Call off your men, sir, or I fire!" cried Bertha, her beautiful eyes flashing her determination.

CHAPTER X.

FACE TO FACE ONCE MORE.

"Look out, lieutenant, that girl means business!" cried one of the troopers in warning tones.

"So that's your game, eh?" said the officer, as he came to a halt before the Southern beauty. "Are you mad, young woman?"

"Cowards!" cried Bertha, her bosom swelling with excitement and indignation. "You call yourselves men, yet stoop to war upon an inoffensive old man, a non-combatant. Shame upon you, I say."

"This is sheer nonsense, young woman. I have my duty to perform. I must and will carry out my orders at all hazards."

As he spoke, a single horseman dashed down the road, and drew up beside the gate.

He quickly dismounted, entered the garden, and came up to the spot where the belligerent girl stood covering Lieutenant Snyder.

"Hullo! What's this?" exclaimed the new-comer, authoritatively.

He was a man of eight-and-twenty years, tall and sunburned.

Handsome, too, with a light, drooping mustache.

His uniform of army blue was faded and covered with a fine dust.

His slouch hat was cocked rakishly over one ear.

And he sported the shoulder straps of a captain in the cavalry service.

"Ha, Captain Chetwood!" said the lieutenant, saluting his superior. "I am having a bit of trouble with this foolish girl. You know, my orders—to burn and destroy all forage that we suspect may be at the service of the enemy. Here, you perceive, we have met with some opposition."

Royal Chetwood, for it was he, glanced at the tanned countenance of the brave defender of her uncle's property.

She had started, and her face suffused with color on hearing the name of the man once so dear to her.

And now it was his turn to show that this sudden and unexpected meeting with the girl he had never forgotten or ceased to love was a great surprise.

They had not met, or heard from each other, since the evening they had parted in the hotel at Richmond, more than four years before.

"You were about to fire the barn, lieutenant?" he said, recovering his self-possession by a strong effort.

"I was."

"Never mind—you may spare the place, Snyder," he continued.

"Captain——"

"I will take the responsibility from your shoulders, lieutenant. I am satisfied these people are all right."

"Why, captain, this young woman is a regular Southern spitfire."

"Never mind, Snyder; you will obey orders. Remount and go forward; I will overtake you in a few moments."

The officer saluted, and calling his squad together, they rode off down the road at a smart pace, their accoutrements jingling merrily as they went.

"Bertha."

"Captain Chetwood," she said, with simple dignity, "I thank you for your manly interference in our behalf. I shall remember it with—with gratitude."

Orvin Clymore now came forward, his face still showing traces of the anxious suspense of the last half-hour.

"You are a Union officer. Allow me to thank you for this act of kindness. Had you not appeared so opportunely, I had been a ruined man," cried the old Virginian, tremulously.

"No thanks are necessary, sir," returned Royal, with a half-smile. "I regret that you were molested. But our men are scouring the valley, and their orders are imperative. It is one of the vicissitudes of war, that the non-combatant must sometimes suffer. You unfortunately are now on the edge of the conflict, and consequently a shuttle-cock for friend and foe. Miss McVane, may I have a few moments' conversation with you?"

"You have met my niece before?" said the former, interrogatively.

"Yes, at her father's home in Charleston, on the eve of the war."

"Uncle," said Bertha, "this is Captain Chetwood. Captain, my uncle, Orvin Clymore."

That was the introduction; then Royal gently led the young lady to the spot where his horse was standing, impatiently pawing the earth.

"How is it I find you here at the very seat of war, Bertha?"

"I have been stopping with my aunt and uncle all summer," she replied, silently admiring the man, though she detested the uniform he wore.

"It was imprudent on your part to continue this visit after you learned Sheridan had entered the valley."

"I am not afraid," she answered, assuming a pretty attitude of defiance.

"I might have guessed that," he said, watching her graceful form eagerly. "You have the spirit of a soldier."

"Indeed," she said, with a saucy laugh.

"I should be proud of you were your sympathies on the right side."

"You do me too much honor, Captain Chetwood," she said, ironically. "I assure you, sir, that my sympathies are on the right side—they have never been otherwise."

"As uncompromising as ever."

"Yes, sir, if you call it such."

"I had hoped otherwise."

"I am sorry; but I am no traitor to my flag and people."

"I don't wonder this conflict has been so long prolonged, when the enemy has such encouragement as you set by your example—for surely there are many like you."

"I am pleased to learn that you believe this. The women of the South are as one in sentiment—in patriotism—in sacrifice."

He looked his admiration.

"I am afraid, Bertha, I no longer occupy a place in your thoughts."

"I must decline to gratify your curiosity on such a subject, sir," she said, with grave dignity.

"True love can never die," he ventured.

"It can sometimes despise," she said.

"Am I to understand from that that you regard me with such a feeling, Bertha?"

"I do not admit your right to catchise me, Captain Chetwood. If I have ceased to regard you in the light of a—a—once dear friend, the fault lies with you, sir."

"You have learned to hate me, then?"

"No, not that. I respect, I esteem you as—a man; I repudiate you as a soldier."

"I am sorry."

"You have chosen your path—why shelter yourself behind vain regrets? Had you worn the gray, my heart would have followed you in every field—proud of its idol. But now——"

"Well?" he said, interrogatively.

"You have ceased to interest me."

Their eyes met, and his drooped under the shock of her words.

"I have never forgotten you," he said, slowly. "I never wish to. I tried to believe that you still retained a kindly thought in which I figured. Well"—a tear glistened on his eyelash—"the dream is over—at last."

She did not reply, and it was plain to be seen that she was agitated in spite of herself.

"I must go," he said; "already I have lingered too long. I may be cut off at any moment, for Mosby's men are swarming the neighborhood. You will say good-by—for the last time."

Mechanically she held out her hand.

He seized it and pressed it to his lips.

"God bless you, Bertha! may you meet some one

who will make you happy—as happy as I would have tried to make you."

Once more he pressed her unresisting hand to his lips; then he mounted his horse, and, waving his adieu, dashed off down the dusty road.

She watched him out of sight; then leaning her head upon the fence, she wept, for her woman's heart yearned for its lost love.

CHAPTER XI.

COLONEL EZRA TRAFTON.

The ringing sound of a horse's hoofs coming up the road at length aroused her.

Wiping her eyes, she saw that the new-comer wore the well-known gray of the Confederate service.

She quickly recognized the rider as Colonel Trafton, her affianced.

Yes, it is true that all things come to him who waits.

And Colonel Trafton, in the disguise of a gentleman and an officer, had, backed by her parents' expressed wishes, won her reluctant acquiesence to their engagement.

Perhaps it was pique at her first love's estrangement; perhaps it was—but, there; who shall presume to fathom a woman's caprice?

Of one thing we are sure—it was not love—that passion could not be duplicated while Royal Chetwood lived.

Her woman's soul knew he was true to his first love; but her perversity sought to revenge the slight she suffered under.

Foolish heart, how vain was the effort!

The colonel rode up and halted his steed at the very spot vacated by the Federal officer.

"You are looking well, Bertha," he said, gallantly, as he dismounted. "You were watching for me?"

"Yes."

Oh, what a fib, little Bertha!

He smiled complacently.

"This is a dangerous spot, my love. Sheridan's men are everywhere to-day."

"Then why court peril yourself?"

"My men are close at hand. See, yonder they come."

A small squad of Mosby's guerrillas came cantering up.

In obedience to a gesture from the colonel, his escort halted to await his pleasure.

"Permit me to lead you to the house. I have a little business with your uncle."

At the door-way of the farm-house Orvin Clymore greeted the Confederate officer.

"Welcome, Ezra," said the former. "It's a pity you did not come earlier."

"Why so, Orvin?"

"A detachment of Sheridan's cavalry was here half an hour ago."

"Then I regret the delay."

Perhaps he did, but there were people with whom the colonel often hobnobbed who were unfriendly enough to impeach that officer's fire-eating asseverations.

In other words, they strongly doubted his courage.

And it is to be presumed they had some reason for their private convictions.

"They intended to destroy my barn and its contents," continued Orvin.

"To what happy accident then do you owe your escape from these incendiaries? I presume some of our men forestalled me."

"No. I owe my immunity to the generosity of their commanding officer."

"Oh, indeed!" said the colonel, incredulously. "How is that?"

"I cannot tell; perhaps Bertha can enlighten you, for he's an old friend of hers."

Ezra Trafton turned to his *fiancee*, whose face was now all of a crimson glow.

The colonel perceived the flush, and his jealous nature was in arms at once.

"Who was this—fellow, Bertha?"

The sneer was not lost on her.

"A Federal officer whom I met before the war."

"A Federal officer?" repeated Trafton. "He was extremely polite to favor you in such a signal manner. May I ask his name?"

"You may have met him. His name is Royal Chetwood."

An ugly frown settled on the colonel's face.

"I have heard of him. A contemptible spy!"

"Ezra."

"Well?" he said, a bit roughly, noticing the indignant flash from her eyes.

"You wrong him by applying such an epithet."

"Oh, pardon me," he said, ironically. "I forgot he was your *friend*."

"He is one of my country's foes—as such I hate him; but as an officer and a gentleman, I respect him," she said.

"One might almost fancy you were a bit—er—interested in this—er—er person."

"Don't be foolish, Ezra," she said, impatiently.

"I should be delighted to meet him."

He spoke vindictively it was easy to see.

"He has been gone but a few moments," said Orvin Clymore. "You and your men might overtake him, I think, if you cut across the fields."

"I'm afraid that's impossible," said the colonel, "much as I should desire the encounter. Had he a large detachment?"

"His troop preceded him by a mile or two."

"Then he rode off alone?" said the officer, with a sudden show of eagerness.

"Quite alone," replied Orvin Clymore.

"In that case it is possible I may come up with him. I will stop in as I return."

"Ezra, you will not go?" said Bertha.

"Most assuredly that is my intention. I will convey to this admirer of yours your kindest regards."

He said this with an evil smile as he prepared to depart.

"You must not."

"Must not?"

"No. It is not a fair act for you and your men to run down the man who has befriended my uncle in his hour of emergency."

"Nonsense!"

"You shall not do it. It is dishonorable—it is cowardly. Six men against one—I thought better of you, Ezra."

"You are a little fool, Bertha!" he said, angrily, releasing her hand from his arm.

"Stop!" she said, stamping her foot. "I will be obeyed!"

"You are out of your senses, girl. I shall pursue him at all hazards."

"Then I shall hate you, Ezra Trafton!" cried the angry girl.

"Oh, no, you won't. It's my duty to capture this Yankee officer, and I mean to try. I shall bring him back alive—or dead."

With these words, and a look that Bertha easily interpreted, he hurried to the road, called his men together, and the squad immediately started off across the fields at a high rate of speed.

CHAPTER XII.

THE PURSUIT AND RESULT.

We took occasion to remark in the preceding chapter that there were a good many loyal adherents of the Southern cause who did not seem to be profoundly impressed with Colonel Trafton's personal valor.

We may say right here that these same critics always claimed to be much mystified as to how the officer in question attained his rank.

Those who claimed to know, averred that it was all owing to the influence of ex-Senator McVane.

Colonel Trafton and his five men spurred forward at a rapid pace.

They were well mounted and armed.

"Ah!" muttered the colonel, "if I can only overtake that fellow, I shall seize the opportunity of settling old scores for good and all. I can easily see that Bertha thinks more of him than she dares to confess. I feel he is a dangerous rival, in spite of the fact that he is a Yankee."

As the party reached the brow of a small hill, they had a good view of the road for some distance ahead.

Not a quarter of a mile away, they saw a single horseman, in Union blue, trotting along the turnpike.

"Forward, boys; there's our man!"

With a half-uttered cheer, they dashed at a break-neck pace down the gentle declivity and into the road.

Captain Royal Chetwood heard the clatter of the horses' hoofs when they struck the stony road.

Turning in his saddle, he perceived the gray coats, and quickly discerned that he was in a ticklish position.

Capture seemed almost certain.

However, he put spurs to his animal and dashed off.

The wild yells of his pursuers told him that his enemies felt sure of their prey.

"This is most unfortunate," he said to himself. "I fear I shall have a long run for it now, unless they get in range and bring me or the horse down. It is fortunate they are without carbines."

For ten minutes more things were pretty evenly balanced.

Half a mile ahead was a cross road, and Royal fancied he saw a detachment of cavalry coming down in that direction.

If friends, he was safe; if the enemy, of course the game was up.

But now it was apparent that the Confederates in the rear were gaining upon him.

Crack!

A pistol-ball whizzed by his head.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, "I must take a hand at this myself. I fancy my reputation as an expert will stand me in well now."

With these words he drew his heavy revolver from the holster, and turning in his saddle, took deliberate aim at his leading pursuer.

Crack!

The horseman threw up one hand convulsively, reeled in his saddle, and fell to the road, shot through the head.

"One!" muttered the captain, grimly.

A fearful yell attested the fierce anger of the Confederates in the rear.

Crack! crack! crack!

They were in deadly earnest now.

But not a bullet reached its mark.

Again Chetwood drew a rapid bead on the troop.

Again a jet of smoke spurted out of the deadly tube.

And again a Southerner dropped to the road, this time sorely wounded.

Another wild yell greeted this performance.

Another useless fusillade followed.

"Two," said the captain. "They are paying dear for this adventure."

A third shot emptied a third saddle.

Captain Chetwood was an unerring marksman.

Had he been at all excited, it is more than probable that he would have missed his men.

But he had long since learned how much depends on steadiness of nerve.

A shot from Colonel Trafton's revolver chipped a bit of leather out of Royal's saddle, and slightly wounded his horse on the neck.

"Here's for number four!"

Chetwood emptied the fourth chamber of his revolver.

This time the ball struck one of the horses squarely in the forehead.

With a bound the animal pitched his rider into the ditch, and dropped, a quivering mass, upon the highway.

Only two were left.

Colonel Trafton and one subaltern.

"He's a devil with that weapon!" cried the man. "He seems to pick us off as easily as though we were puppets at a target range. It's sure death, colonel; we'd better let him go."

"Never!" exclaimed Trafton, whose natural cowardice was quite overshadowed by his intense vindictive feeling against the man he now regarded as his rival in love.

The soldier, however, had no desire to go on record as a dead hero.

He was no coward.

But what avail is it to face sure death?

If his resolution to follow had faltered, a bullet furrowing a line of red across his cheek determined his course.

He swerved his horse around, and made off by the road he had come.

Seeing but one man now coming upon him, and scorning to shoot him down in what seemed to him cold blood, Chetwood reined in his horse.

"Fool," he muttered, "he comes to his death!"

The colonel dashed up and discharged his revolver at that range.

But what effect can excited, tremulous nerves impart to one's aim.

The bullet went wide of its mark.

Indeed, Royal almost felt inclined to laugh, for he easily saw that the man was fairly beside himself.

The colonel now drew his sabre.

That was a challenge the captain accepted at once.

They were but a few yards apart when Royal recognized his opponent.

"Trafton!" he exclaimed.

"Ay, you scoundrel! On your guard! It is your life or mine!"

"Be it so," said the captain, "though I had rather engage with a stranger."

"I owe you a long-standing grudge, Royal Chetwood, and it will not be my fault if I fail to pay the score now."

"And I should be glad to avenge the injury you did my friend, were it not that war is too serious a matter to be used as a cover for the settlement of personal feuds."

Their swords came together with a crash.

The sunlight flashed upon the quivering blades.

Parry and lunge it was, in quick succession.

And here again Chetwood showed an immense superiority over his antagonist, whose rage and hate alone had urged him to the encounter.

Royal stood mostly on the defensive.

He simply played with the colonel.

The horses moved responsive to the manuevres of their riders.

Both were well trained to the service.

"Curse you!" exclaimed Trafton, after another vain lunge.

"Colonel, you're in my power. I could have cut you down several times," said Royal, coolly throwing aside another desperate stroke. "You cannot touch me in your present state of excitement. Desist and go your way. I have no wish to even wound you."

"Never!" yelled Trafton. "I shall kill you!"

"You are wasting your strength to no purpose, colonel. Were you less furious, you could perceive that I'm immensely your superior with the sword. It is simply folly on your part. Draw off," he continued, impatiently, "or in self-defense I may seriously disable you!"

But Trafton was insanely furious at his failure to even wound his antagonist, and consqeuently was beyond the sense of reason.

Chetwood had failed twice to disarm his antagonist with skillful twists of the sabres; but now he saw he must settle the affray at once without further argument.

So he took the offensive at once, beat down Trafton's guard, pierced his wrist, and thus caused him to drop his sword.

The colonel now realized his extreme peril, and turned pale as death.

But Royal never intended to follow up his advantage.

He simply wheeled his horse about to dash away, when a quivering blast smote upon the air.

It was the note of a bugle.

The next moment a large party of mounted men dashed into the road ahead.

They wore the Confederate gray!

CHAPTER XIII.

WITHIN A NOOSE.

The moment Captain Chetwood heard that bugle blast and saw the gray uniform, he became alarmed for his personal safety.

His own men were far in advance, and there was little chance for assistance coming to him now, from that quarter, at least.

"Surrender, captain!" cried Colonel Trafton. "You cannot now escape."

Captain Chetwood believed that where there is life there is hope.

He pulled back his horse suddeuly, wheeled, and dashed away, much to the surprise of Colonel Trafton.

"Halt, Yank!"

The impetuous captain did not halt, however.

Then the woods and hills fairly rang with the report of carbines.

A furious volley swept down the road.

Captain Chetwood no longer rode in the distance.

That volley had not been in vain. Union horse and rider were both down in the dust of the road.

With a fierce yell, the gray troopers swept forward.

Not a bullet had touched the Union captain, but his horse had been riddled. As the animal fell, the captain's foot became entangled in the stirrup, and before he could extricate himself the Confederates were upon him.

It would have been the height of folly to resist them—Captain Chetwood was not a fool, so he submitted to the inevitable with the best grace possible.

There were half a hundred of the troopers, mem-

bers of the notorious Mosby's command, who had become separated from the main body, and were scouring the country in quest of plunder, while Mosby and his men were hanging about the rear of the advancing Union army, seeking to capture and destroy Sheridan's wagon trains.

"You ought to have obeyed sooner," said Colonel Trafton, as he bent from his saddle and peered into Captain Chetwood's face.

"I am satisfied if you are not," was the blunt reply of the young officer.

"Ah, I am glad so little makes you happy," sneered Trafton. "If one of these trees should bear fruit, how would you feel then?"

"Insensible at the last, I suppose."

"Quite right."

The officer in command of the detachment saluted the colonel, whom he recognized.

By virtue of his rank, Trafton now assumed authority on the spot.

"To what branch of Sheridan's command do you belong, sir?" demanded the colonel.

"Torbert's cavalry," replied our hero, without betraying the least trepidation at his desperate plight.

"You are a dangerous man," said Trafton, eying his prisoner vindictively.

"Thank you for the compliment."

"You seem to be a dead shot, from what I've seen to-day."

"I seldom fail to hit my man."

"Why are you alone in this vicinity?

"Simply because of circumstances."

"You are not telling the truth, sir."

Royal flushed angrily.

"What do you mean?"

"Simply what I say."

"I do not understand you."

"I think you will before I've done with you."

The captain did not reply to this.

"You have acted as a scout for Sheridan, have you not?"

"Perhaps I have."

"In a word, sir, you are a spy!"

"You are wrong!"

"I am satisfied you are."

"I am not in a position to argue the matter," said Royal, "but, nevertheless, I swear you are entirely wrong in such a declaration."

"The fate of a spy is death," said the colonel, with a gleam of exultation in his eyes.

"I must be proved to be such."

"We shall see."

Colonel Trafton rode aside with the captain, and consulted with him for some minutes earnestly.

"Perfectly right and proper, of course," answered the captain, to a question from his superior. "If you have met this fellow before, and know that he has acted the spy, I see no reason why he should not suffer for it."

"The Yankee general is making it hot for us in the valley just now, besides burning and destroying everything he can lay hands on."

"And you say this fellow has put to death some of our men?"

"Yes; he shot four of my troopers a short time ago, and would have escaped but for your timely appearance.

"He is a desperate rascal, it appears, colonel," said the officer.

"He should be made an example of."

"I quite agree with you, colonel."

The two men then rode back to the command.

Colonel Trafton dismounted and secured his horse to a sapling near by; then he faced the prisoner.

"Captain, we have been discussing your case."

"I surmised as much. Have you concluded to re-

lease me at once; or am I to take the road to Richmond and a dungeon?" said Captain Chetwood, quickly.

"Neither. You are to adorn one of these trees," was the grim response.

"You do not mean that you would murder an unarmed man?"

"No; I simply mean that I would hang a Union spy."

"But I am not a Union spy."

"The criminal always denies his guilt," sneered the colonel. "Sheridan is laying waste our beautiful valley, and murdering Southern citizens by wholesale; to hang one of his cut-throats is a pleasant duty I owe my country."

"Your specious pleading is entirely unnecessary, sir," retorted Captain Chetwood. "You have resolved upon committing murder, and try to still your conscience in this way. It will not do. You wear the uniform of the Confederacy, so called, and pretend to represent an honorable foe. But you have the instincts of a coward and a rebel. If you are a specimen of Southern chivalry, then God help the South! But——"

"Stop!" hissed Colonel Trafton, becoming white with rage. "I will not be spit upon by a miserable Yankee spy. Colonel Trafton is not the one to forgive an insult. Boys, you will string this impudent mudsill to one of these trees. He is a spy, and deserves to die."

Among fifty men belonging to Mosby's celebrated gang, a rope would not be hard to find.

Among the horses bestrode by the rebel band were many rope halters, and several of these were at once brought into requisition.

A broad Virginian oak was selected to act the part of scaffold on this occasion.

Captain Chetwood stood with folded arms regarding

the ominous preparations, his face pale, yet not a muscle of that handsome countenance twitching with fear.

He had faced death on many battle-fields without flinching. Why should he tremble now?

It was not the death he expected to die, if die he must, when he turned his back on his boyhood's home amid the everlasting hills of the Keystone State, and faced the Southern bars, to battle for the preservation of the Union and the old flag.

Father, mother, and sister had bidden him good-by with fond tears at parting with their only boy; but not of regret at the step he had taken, even though he should fall a victim to the bullet of treason.

But to die in that ignominious way was not what the young patriot had counted on.

"Colonel Trafton!"

The officer turned his dark face toward the speaker a frown settling over his countenance.

"Well, sir, I will hear what you have to say if you are only quick about it."

Captain Chetwood raised his arm and pointed at the sun, which glowed in the hot Southern sky.

"Colonel Trafton, that sun will rise for an hour, then go down, until in a few hours it will sink in darkness in the west. Your Confederacy has risen, passed its meridian, and is now far down the western horizon of its existence. After fighting nearly four years for the flag you follow, will you stain its folds, your own name forever, by committing a wicked and causeless crime? If you have a mother—a wife——"

"S'death!" thundered the colonel at this point. "You have said enough, upstart. If you were Sheridan himself I would hang you."

"'Tis well," uttered the cool young captain. "Remember, however, that you may one day stand as I do now. Torbert will not spare you then. Your crime will follow you, and the blood of an innocent man

cry aloud for vengeance. I have no more to say; do your work, traitor and coward that you are."

An oath, round and deep, fell from the lips of Colonel Ezra Trafton.

"We have had quite enough of this Yankee's impudence," he cried. "String him up, boys, and then we will be on the move."

The noosed rope was hung over the Union captain's head.

"Remember, this will only add to your punishment hereafter," uttered the doomed man, as he felt the hangman's noose tighten under his ear.

CHAPTER XIV.

"LOYAL MOSE."

Colonel Trafton had not made a confidant of his victim, else the young Union captain would have better understood why the Confederate colonel wished to dispose of him.

The reader, of course, knows there was a woman in the case.

That woman was Bertha McVane.

The colonel understood well enough that the outrage he was about to perpetrate was entirely without excuse.

That it was not in his country's cause, but to minister to his own private ends that he was about to put the gallant officer to a terrible death.

Even were the charge true that Chetwood was a spy, the regulations of the service required that he should at least have the benefit of a military trial.

To hang him without that formality was assuming a responsibility no man in his cool senses would have dared.

Not even Mosby himself, who was generally cred-

ited with making a short shift with many of his prisoners, would have justified such an outrageous action.

Colonel Trafton, however, had no qualms of conscience in the matter.

He desired this man's death above all things.

As he could not shoot him down in his tracks, he seized upon a despicable pretext to cover the act of vengeance.

He feared that his rival might escape, and sooner than take that risk he took the law into his own hands.

It clearly showed the cowardly, villainous side of his character.

"Pull away, boys!"

It was the colonel's voice that rang through the woods.

Captain Chetwood realized, as the rope tightened about his throat, that his doom was sealed.

"Good-by, old flag—good-by, Bertha!"

Then Royal Chetwood was dangling in the air.

"Thus be it with all Yankees."

Spang!

Captain Chetwood came to the ground in a heap.

If he was not dead, the foremost hangman was.

A bullet had sped to the guerrila's heart, and his sudden release of the rope let Colonel Trafton's victim down on the run.

Other hands were on the rope, but the death of their comrade caused a panic, and the sudden relaxing of the rope.

Spang!—spang!

Bright flashes startled the birds from their perches, and the sharp crack of rifles echoed like the knell of doom in the ears of the startled Confederate troop.

"To horse!" screamed Colonel Trafton, in a paroxysm of fear, at the same time bounding to the side of his own steed, and in his haste not waiting to untie the halter, severing it with a blow from his sword.

"Charge, boys! No quarter to Mosby's troopers!"

It was a ringing command.

The woods seemed to quake under the rapid discharge of rifles, and Confederate troopers fell like grain before the reaper's scythe.

Then came the rush of a body of Unionists on foot, firing as they advanced.

The Confederate troop scattered and fled precipitately.

"Hurrah!"

A young man, clad in rusty blue, sprang into the road and raised the poor captain in his arms. Forty men followed at his back.

"Good heavens! Royal Chetwood, is it you?"

"Yes," gasped the captain, tearing at the noose, which the young man quickly relieved him of. "Who are you?"

"Don't you know me, Royal?"

"Mose, is it possible?"

They clasped hands fervently.

"Thank God, I came in time."

"Yes," replied Royal, feebly, "it was touch and go with me."

This was the first meeting between the two friends since they parted at Richmond after the battle of Bull Run.

"How glad I am to see you again, Royal," said the young man, enthusiastically.

"And I you, my dear friend. Once more I owe my life to you."

"There; say no more about it. That it was my good fortune to do so is a joy beyond expression."

"You are truly a friend in need. Where have you been all these years of the war?"

"Always well—and always on the move. I'll explain everything some other time. But tell me the meaning of this terrible outrage."

"I can only assign it to personal enmity. I was ad-

judged a spy, and without even the formality of a trial, was strung up as you saw."

"Who was in command of this Confederate troop?"

"A scoundrel—Colonel Trafton."

The new-comer's face grew dark suddenly.

"Colonel Trafton—Ezra Trafton? He is the man I long to meet in open fight. I have vainly sought him; but the time will yet come when I hope to see him swing from the end of a rope."

"He amply deserves such an end," said Captain Chetwood, "after this outrage, for which he had not the faintest excuse."

"The wrong he did my poor sister cries out for justice. He cannot escape a brother's vengeance. Heaven would not permit such a villain to escape the penalty of his misdeeds. He is a murderer in the sight of God. Would I had known it was that wretch who was in command here!"

"Where are your horses?" said Royal.

"Couldn't get up quietly enough, so we left the animals back in the gulch, and came on foot. One of our boys was out on a raid and brought news of the presence of a Confederate troop, and of a prisoner. I little supposed that prisoner was Captain Chetwood. Why are you here? I supposed all of the regulars were with Sheridan, who is pushing Early hotly."

"Yes; Sheridan has given the enemy little rest lately. He is rushing them up the valley at a great rate. I mean to rejoin my command, and let this confounded scouting business go. I don't care to burn barns and houses; it's too barbarous."

"It does seem so, captain; but it is necessary sometimes. We must retaliate, or loose the respect of all men," answered "Loyal Mose," for thus had the young Virginian been dubbed by his friends and neighbors.

"Mose, the traitor" was what Southern sympathizers called the young Union ranger, and woe be

unto him should he chance to fall into their hands—especially the hands of Mosby or any of his men.

"I expect to join Sheridan to-day," said Bluff, after a few minutes' reflection. "Early will make a stand at Fisher's Hill, I think. There's to be a big fight, and I am bound to participate."

"And, I too!" cried Captain Chetwood, quickly. "My horse is dead, and——"

"Come with me. I will furnish you another. Arms you can get from these;" and a slender forefinger was pointed at the fallen gray-coats near.

Captain Chetwood acted on the suggestion of his young friend, and soon placed himself in possession of a brace of revolvers and a good sabre.

By this time the Unionists were returning, having given up the pursuit of the mounted Confederates.

"If we had been mounted we might have scooped the whole lot," said "Loyal Mose;" "but I am satisfied for the present. I may meet Colonel Trafton at Fisher's Hill, and settle old scores on the field of battle. I hope so, at least. I have nothing to live for but revenge, and to strike honest blows for the old flag. Ah! how strange it seems to me, Royal that men—Americans—can enroll themselves under any other banner than the Stars and Stripes. I was born on Virginia soil, but I do not forget that this is the State of Washington, Captain Chetwood."

"Most certainly."

"And Virginia has turned her back upon his memory. Ah! if Washington was here to-day he would shed a tear over the departed patriotism of his native State, and then he would lift the sword to smite her for her folly. I am blushing every day, captain, at the indignity the mother of presidents has inflicted on her firstborn. I feel like doing something desperate—indeed, I do."

"It will come right in the end, Moses," answered the captain.

"I hope so—I am confident it will."

Deep and smothered were the words of the young patriot, showing that he felt them—every one; they were the honest convictions of his soul.

It was something to stand true to the Union in those days, even in Virginia; the State that wit nessed the hanging of John Brown, which was but a prelude to the coming strife, witnessed the throttling of the civil struggle also—the finale to four years of blood.

No; "Loyal Mose" was brave as he was true to the flag of Washington. He had stepped forth from a ruined home to lift high the Stars and Stripes, and carry it forward to final victory; and he was but one of many the war for the Union produced.

"If you choose, you may ride with us to join Sheridan," said Bluff, after his men had all returned and stood in groups under the trees.

"I accept your offer, Moses, and will ride with you," was Captain Chetwood's answer.

The dead were left where they had fallen. It was not safe to remain to perform the burial service, since Mosby might pounce down upon that spot at any moment.

Back to their horses went the squad of Virginia rangers, and soon Captain Chetwood found himself riding beside "Loyal Mose" down one of Virginia's flinty roads, sometimes under the silent arches of the wood, then again out into open fields, where all seemed smiling peace and plenty.

The distant roar of guns, however, announced the truth; peace did not reign supreme.

CHAPTER XV.

FISHER'S HILL.

It was on the fifteenth of September that General Grant left City Point to visit Sheridan at his headquarters and consult with him on future work in the Shenandoah Valley.

At Charlestown the two generals met, and Sheridan soon made plain to the commander the true situation in the valley.

Grant, after hearing Sheridan's plans and approving them, asked if he could be ready to move the following Tuesday.

"Yes," replied the latter, "by Monday;" and before daylight that morning the army was in motion.

By three o'clock in the afternoon it was drawn up in line of battle, in front of the rebel position at Opequon Creek, and as soon as the cavalry, under Torbert, arrived at the desired point on the extreme Confederate right, Sheridan ordered a general advance.

The artillery opened along the whole line—the columns moved steadily forward, and Early soon discovered that Sheridan was in earnest.

His position, however, was a strong one, and he stubbornly held it until Averill's and Merritt's bugles were heard on his right, as the firm-set squadrons bore fiercely down.

Rolled up before the impetuous charge, the Southern line at length crumbled into fragments, and the whole army broke in utter confusion and went streaming up the valley toward Winchester.

Through Winchester the enemy were driven.

Several thousand prisoners were captured, and the rebel dead and wounded were left in Union hands.

Early was absolutely stupefied at the shock.

This was not the fighting he had been accustomed to, nor ever would be.

Great credit is undoubtedly due to Sheridan's subordinates; but Sheridan was the life of the entire battle, and gave the foe a taste of his quality, which he expected his own troops to follow in the future.

Early lost thirty-five hundred killed and wounded, five thousand prisoners, some guns and fifteen battle-flags. Three of his generals were killed and four wounded.

Not only was Early driven through Winchester, but he was sent "whizzing up the valley," so vigorously pursued that he did not make a stand until he reached Fisher's Hill, thirty miles beyond.

Like a tiger let loose, Sheridan was hurling himself upon the foe.

The enemy were completely dumfounded at the rapidity of his movements, and quite panic-stricken for the time.

At Fisher's Hill, Early posted his retiring and beaten army in a strong position, and here resolved to hold the fort and turn back the sweeping tide if possible.

Fisher's Hill is not put down on the pages of history as a victory for the Confederates. The gray-coats were destined to suffer another humiliation as the invincible Sheridan moved on their works.

The firing which had greeted the ears of our friends, mentioned in the first chapter was from Sheridan's artillery, which was merely feeling the enemy's position during the early part of the day.

Early was strongly footed, and believed that the disgraceful retreat of the past few days would be retrieved in a substantial victory.

Captain Chetwood and "Loyal Mose" reached the

right of the Union army, which was then moving into position for flanking the Confederates.

Moses Bluff joined Averill, and was soon engaged in driving in the enemy's skirmishers, which was but the prelude to the coming contest for the mastery.

Chetwood was soon with his own command under the lead of Crook.

This general was marching for the purpose of a flanking movement, while Averill made the front warm for a time, which held Early's attention until Crook could execute his grand movement.

Tramp, tramp, tramp.

A great army of blue-coats went filing into the woods, over rugged hills, and through level stretches, the goal of their desires being Early's left flank.

The day had dawned with the sullen boom of cannon. It was to go out in the crash of battle and roar of musketry.

Phil Sheridan, the gallant hero of a score of battles, was not yet to be checked in his onward march up the beautiful valley of the Shenandoah.

On pressed the veterans of Opequon, approaching nearer and nearer the goal.

The army of Sheridan was now on the move from wing to wing.

Crook was swinging around the hills on the right; Wright, with the Sixth Corps, moved to the assault in the centre, and Emory, with the Nineteenth, on the left.

A grand advance along the whole line.

Forward pressed Crook's veterans, elated with their late victories, and anxious to start the enemy once more whirling up the valley.

Soon puffs of smoke rose along the slopes.

Then came a sudden jar.

The fight for Fisher's Hill had opened.

"Forward, boys!"

With drawn sword, Captain Chetwood rode at the front.

The gray-coats, their intrenchments, and their guns were visible now.

The flank movement was a success, and with a cheer that echoed over the hills, the brave boys in blue dashed forward upon the astounded enemy.

Simultaneously with Crook's attack, came the sound of battle on the left and centre.

"Hurrah! We have them on the hip now!" cried Captain Chetwood.

Almost on the instant his horse reeled and plunged to the ground.

The rider was unhurt.

Once more on his feet, Chetwood led his men forward into the roaring vortex of battle.

The shock of battle was terrific.

Men fell on every hand, brave soldiers of the North; yet, not a soul faltered, but onward pressed through raining shot and shell.

"Hurrah!"

The ringing Northern cheer welled out far and wide, and echoed above the roar and crash of arms.

It was the first note of victory, and but a faint cry was sent back in answer, a defiant Southern yell, that was soon smothered, and went back to sleep under the roar of the Yankee guns.

"Hurrah!"

Again that shout, as the gray ranks reeled.

Death shots flew thick and fast.

A stinging pain in his shoulder announced to Captain Chetwood the fact that he had been hit, how badly hurt he had not time to ascertain at that hour.

Swinging his sword, the brave young captain held his place and led on his men.

The Confederates were going back.

Flag after flag went down.

They were breaking in disorder on the right.

Guns, knapsacks, and even canteens were flung aside, and the opening of a grand panic was apparent.

The centre and left still held their ground, disputing with tenacity the bloody slope.

Still those gray clad veterans could not hold the hill.

For three days they had been fleeing before a victorious foe, and they were disheartened.

"They yield. Forward, boys, and capture the guns!"

It was the cry of Captain Chetwood, as he dashed over the fallen gray-coats in front, and pushed to the side of a cannon.

The Unionists pressed on, sweeping all before them.

The Southern flag was swept from the field.

Early was utterly dumfounded.

Was there no staying Little Phil's troops? Of what were they made?

Along the front the enemy fared even worse than on the left, where Crook's veterans were at them.

The Sixth Corps broke through, cutting in twin the Confederate army.

Emory was dashing against the right wing of Early's forces, Crook the left, while Wright burst the centre, and the whole disordered host was soon broken into fragments, and routed at every point.

Fisher's Hill was won!

The fight had been of brief duration.

"Forward, boys!"

With a ringing shout the boys in blue dashed forward in pursuit of the fleeing gray-coats.

"Victory—victory—victory!"

The glad cry rang out on every hand, and once more the beaten hosts of the South went back in wild and hopeless rout, utteringly overwhelmed.

Captain Chetwood was gallantly leading his men

in the advance, when an earthquake seemed to shake the ground.

Blue lights filled the young Federal's vision, and then darkness came, whelming everything.

Captain Chetwood lay bleeding and insensible on the ground.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE CONFEDERATE'S LAST SHOT.

Riding at the head of nearly a hundred bronzed veterans, Moses Bluff seemed the very incarnation of battle.

Yet he was young, but just turned twenty, four years the junior of his friend, Captain Royal Chetwood.

Smarting under the wrongs that called for redress, the young Virginian seemed to grow in years, in power and strength with the occasion.

He had never failed the brave mountaineers whom he led, never exhibited aught but the grandest courage on every field where battle clashed, and blue and gray struggled for the mastery.

On this occasion at Fisher's Hill, the young mountaineer was at the front of the strife, and led his men into the most awful dangers with the coolness of one used to strife on the bloody battle-fields.

"I may meet Colonel Trafton," argued the youth. "If I do, he or I must die."

This was uttered with clinched teeth and frowning brow.

When the enemy's lines broke, then the cavalry was brought into requisition, and sent in pursuit of the fleeing legions.

"Now then, give them Jesse!" shouted "Loyal Mose," with his bright sword flourishing aloft, as he

struck spurs to his gallant steed, and led the way into the fleeing mass of beaten men.

Sabres gleamed, pistols cracked, and the bloody drama went on.

From Fisher's Hill the rebels were soon rushing in mad retreat.

Artillery, horses, wagons, rifles, knapsacks, and canteens were abandoned in their precipitate flight.

The defeat was a disastrous rout indeed.

Many prisoners and sixteen pieces of artillery fell into Union hands.

"Loyal Mose" and his "tigers" did not follow up the retreating host beyond a few miles.

Back to the field of strife they made their way, a good looking body of cavalry indeed.

Mose was looking for Captain Chetwood.

The Pennsylvanian and young Virginian were like Damon and Pythias, and now that the strife was over, Bluff was anxious about the safety of his comrade.

It was dark when he found the captain's regiment, only to learn that the brave captain was among the missing.

"Have you searched the field?" questioned "Loyal Mose."

"We have—he is not there," was the reply.

"Then he must be a prisoner."

"Hardly," answered the lieutenant whom Mose was questioning. "I don't think the Johnnies cared to take prisoners with them. They made rather rapid movements, if you remember."

"If you will point out the place where your regiment fought, I will look over the field," said "Loyal Mose."

The lieutenant being garrulous, soon went over the whole field, and pointed in glowing colors to the daring heroism of the boys belonging to the ——th regiment.

"Loyal Mose" was patience itself on occasions, but

to-night he had a nervous feeling all over, and left the lieutenant, descanting to the empty air, early in the narrative, to look for his missing friend.

Leaving his horse in charge of one of his men, Moses made his way over the bloody field on foot.

"Halloo!"

A voice came to the young mountaineer through the gloom. The voice sounded strangely familiar.

Quickly Moses made his way forward.

"Where are you?"

He paused to ask the question at length.

"Here. Is that you, Moses?"

It was the voice of Captain Chetwood, and the Virginia ranger was soon at the captain's side.

"Are you badly hurt, Royal?" questioned the youth, as he discovered Chetwood reclining on the ground near a cannon.

"No, just stunned a bit. But I'm wedged in under some of these bodies."

Quickly Moses Bluff sprang to the side of his friend and extricated him from his position. The captain, it proved, had only been stunned by a fragment of shell, and was now scarcely the worse for his fall. His sword lay near, and seeing this, the Union captain was, like Richard of old, himself again.

"Where are the Confederates?" asked Chetwood, as he stood leaning on his sword in the gloom.

"Fled like frightened sheep," answered Moses, with a low laugh.

"Yes, I remember; they were running when I fell. You came out unscathed, it seems."

"Entirely so."

A slight sound to the left caused the two men to glance in that direction. It was a groan or an oath from a wounded soldier.

"Take that, you Yankee dog!"

The red flash of a pistol was almost simultaneous with its ringing report.

"Ah! oh, my God!"

"Loyal Mose" reeled, and would have fallen but for Captain Chetwood, who caught the sinking form in his arms.

"Moses—Moses! you are hit!"

"Mortally hurt, I fear," was the reply of the loyal mountaineer, in a husky whisper.

Quickly Captain Chetwood bore his friend to a little knoll and laid him on the grass.

"I will go for a surgeon," said the captain, gently.

"No—no! I shall die while you are gone. What—who was it fired?"

"A wounded Confederate, I think. I will find out."

Captain Chetwood sprang up.

Then he bethought him of the condition of young Bluff, and bent quickly over him once more.

Tearing the clothing from the wound, the captain tore up bits of the ranger's shirt, and with the rags attempted to stanch the flow of blood.

He succeeded, too, in a little time.

"How do you feel, Moses?"

"Better. Perhaps the wound is not so bad after all."

"It is not mortal, at any rate," answered the captain. "A wound through the shoulder is not necessarily so."

"I shall get up again, then!" cried Moses. "I could not die now, with my wrongs unavenged—it would not be right."

"No, you will live to fight this war through," answered Captain Chetwood. "I have a premonition that the end is not far off."

"The end of the war?"

"Yes, Moses. The South is hard pressed for men, now, and, ere many months, the old flag will float unchallenged from Maine to California—from the Lakes to the Gulf."

"I hope so," groaned the wounded ranger.

After seeing to the young man's comfort, Captain Chetwood went to look up the assassin.

The gloom rendered his task not a pleasant or a certain one.

He remembered the spot from whence he had seen the bright flash, and approached it cautiously, not caring to become himself the target for a shot.

His caution was not necessary on this occasion.

Captain Chetwood always carried matches on his person, inclosed in a water-proof safe.

From this he extracted one of the lucifers and ignited it on his clothing, then held it over his head.

The sight that met the gaze of the Union captain was one that sent a thrill to his heart.

Wedged in between several dead Confederates was stretched the body of a tall man, an officer, as there was the insigna on his collar.

His head had fallen back now against the body of a comrade, the eyes wide open, and glassy.

The lower jaw had fallen, the whole face disfigured by a hideous grin that in death was terribly realistic.

The dead man's right arm was extended across a dead body, the long, bony fingers clutching, with the tenacity of death, a five-chambered revolver.

From this the bullet had been fired which laid Moses low, and came near terminating his life.

It was the last act of a dying man.

Captain Chetwood shuddered as he gazed.

The match soon burned out, and darkness once more whelmed the scene; but, while he lived, the Union captain would not forget the sight he witnessed that night after the memorable fight on Fisher's Hill.

The hand of the dead had fired a shot that came near to the life of one of Virginia's bravest sons.

With the expiring blaze, Captain Chetwood arose to his feet—he had been crouching—and hurried back once more to the side of his wounded friend.

"Did you find the villain who fired?" questioned the wounded ranger, eagerly.

"I did."

"Who was it?"

"An officer," answered the captain. "He is dead now, and will do no more harm to the Union's defenders."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE WOUNDED SOLDIER.

The defeat of Early at Fisher's Hill was a complete rout—a headlong flight on his part.

Sheridan pushed on to Woodstock, where he halted to get his supplies up.

Averill, however, kept up the pursuit to Mount Jackson, twenty-five miles south of Strasburg.

Here Early rallied his broken battalions, and once more turned at bay.

But on Sheridan's arrival he again retreated, though stubbornly contesting every inch of ground, and at last made a determined stand in Brown's Gap on the Blue Ridge, eight miles south-east of Port Republic.

Sheridan pursued as far as this place, and halted.

In the meantime, Torbert, with his cavalry, moved on Staunton and Waynesboro, destroying bridges, government property, and everything that could be of benefit to the enemy.

Early's position was too strong to be carried by assault, while it seriously threatened Sheridan's flank, should he attempt to march on Lynchburg—the goal of all the expeditions up the Shenandoah Valley.

Unless Early could be driven from Brown's Gap, it would be madness to advance farther.

Besides, his supplies in the rear were in danger of being cut off by Mosby, and he, therefore, resolved to fall back.

It was on the day following the defeat at Fisher's Hill that a small party of Unionists halted in front of Orvin Clymore's red farm-house.

In their midst, on a stretcher, they bore a wounded man.

Mr. Clymore came out to learn the cause of this visit, when he was addressed by Captain Chetwood, who was with the party.

"Can you care for a wounded man—a native Virginian, who was badly hurt in yesterday's fight?"

"Would like to oblige you, but it is simply impossible," answered the farmer.

"I understand——"

"Why don't you take the fellow to the hospital?"

"Simply because he refuses to go where so many are dying. He is a friend of mine, and I thought it no harm to apply to you. Your trouble shall be well rewarded, and the presence of a Unionist in your house may be of service to you now, since Sheridan is master of the valley."

"The Federals won a victory yesterday, then?" cried the farmer, quickly.

"A good one. Early's troops are dispersed. It is doubtful if the rebellion ever holds up its head in the Shenandoah Valley again."

The farmer seemed dejected at the news.

At this moment Bertha McVane came out to the road, and catching view of the wan, white face of the wounded man, her womanly sympathies were at once enlisted.

He was Captain Chetwood's friend, too, and that was an additional reason why she chimed in with the captain's urgent appeal.

The farmer yielded somewhat ungracefully, and Moses Bluff was taken to the farm-house, and up into an airy chamber in the second story.

He was laid upon a clean white bed.

His wound was attended to, as best it could be, by

the captain, who then parted from his friend, leaving encouraging words behind.

"Bertha," said Royal, when he rejoined the young lady below, "I rely upon you to see that your patient has the best of care. I ask it for old time's sake. He is a dear friend, and worthy of all that can be done in his behalf."

"You may rely on me," she said, quietly.

"I thank you."

"You need not. The South does not war on wounded men."

"He will not trouble you long as his wound is not a dangerous one. But, nevertheless, it requires attention."

"Were he my brother, he could not be better nursed. I like his face. It is the face of an honest, noble-hearted young man. I regret he is not on our side."

"He is a brave patriot."

"A Virginian, I think you said?"

"Yes."

"I like him the better for that, though I grieve to think him an enemy."

"You must combat your uncle's prejudices against him."

"I will try; but Uncle Orvin is very set in his opinions. At any rate, he is quite safe with us."

"I trust so; but may I ask one question?"

"A dozen, if you wish," she said, curiously.

"I have learned that Colonel Trafton, whom I first met in Charleston, occasionally pays you a visit. Am I right?"

"Yes," she said, with a flush.

"Then I wish to say that it would be extremely unfortunate if the colonel and my friend up stairs were to meet."

"Why?" she said, in great surprise.

"The reason I may not tell you. All I can say is

that the enmity existing between these two would lead to most unpleasant consequences should they come face to face."

"You amaze me."

"I rely on you, Bertha, if you would prevent actual bloodshed, keep them apart. Do not let the colonel see this man."

"Well, this is very strange," she said, "but I will do as you say."

"Again I thank you from my heart."

"Did you see anything of the colonel in the late battle?"

"No. I fancy from what I know of the man, that he would not care to risk his personal safety much in such stirring scenes as we had of late."

"Do you mean to insinuate that Colonel Trafton is a coward, sir?"

She spoke hotly now, much to the captain's surprise.

"Well, perhaps that would be the plainest terms I could apply to a man whose actions I have unfortunately had occasion to discover in their worst aspect."

"You insult me, Captain Chetwood!"

There was no mistaking her indignant attitude now.

"Insult you, Bertha? I hope not."

"But you do, sir, when you apply such an epithet to Colonel Trafton."

"I beg your pardon, but I was not aware you entertained such a strong interest in that person," said Royal, more than ever astonished.

"Then, sir, I must inform you that Colonel Trafton is my intended husband."

If a shell had exploded in the room at that moment, the gallant Union officer could not have been more startled.

He was fairly thunderstruck.

"You—you, Bertha, engaged to that——"

He was about to say scoundrel, but checked himself.

"Bertha, is this the truth?"

"It is, sir."

He was as pale as death now.

Not only his own hopes, to which he had still clung like a drowning man to a straw, were scattered to the winds, but the woman he loved better than life itself was to be the wife of the meanest villain on earth.

It was too much, and he fairly groaned aloud.

She saw his agony, and for the first time endured it with an apathetic face.

He had wounded her in a tender place, and for the moment almost despised him.

Ah, if she had only known the truth!

With an effort, Royal recovered his self-possession.

The dream was ended, then?

Well, so be it.

"Bertha, I congratulate you on your—choice."

Without another word he turned from her, and passed from the room and the house.

Mounting his horse, he rode away, followed by the squad that had brought the wounded ranger to the Clymore farm-house.

Two hours later, Bertha McVane sat fanning the wounded soldier who lay sleeping quietly.

Bertha watched his face, noted the pale, high brow, the straight, rather prominent nose, with its trembling nostril, the heavy lashes, and abundant black masses of hair that lay back in waves from his forehead. The mouth, with its rather full lips, curved like a woman's—a mouth, gentle and kissable, Bertha thought—almost a mere boy withal, and such as he in battle, bearing up the flag of the Union.

Little did she dream that this young man was one of the terrors of the valley—the invincible "Loyal

Mose," of whom she had heard frightful stories that had sent the blood receding to her heart.

Mose Bluff awoke at length, and a smile that beautified his boyish face, swept over it, as he looked into the black orbs of the girl who sat beside his couch.

"I thought it all a dream," he said. "I am surely awake now, and this is no dream; you are real flesh and blood, miss, and I am at home."

"You will be well cared for here," said Bertha. "Your friend has gone to participate in other battles."

"Captain Chetwood?"

"Yes; he brought you here—you must remember!"

"I do, but I did not know you were here. What house is this? I thought I was at home—my old home under the shadow of the hill, where he came and destroyed all. First Mary, then mother and father. They died from grief at poor sister's sad fate. She followed the man she loved, the villain who deceived her, then cast her off, and—and she died. Father and mother died heart-broken—they lay side by side under the grass beside a mountain brook, and I, the last one left, I am on his trail, seeking to avenge poor Mary."

A red tinge grew in the cheeks of the sufferer, and Bertha believed that fever was coming, and she cautioned him not to talk too much, even though she was interested in his story.

"Well, I was a fool!" uttered the boy, bluntly, "to speak of my ruined home at all; but that's the way when I get to thinking it over."

"Don't think of it now," ordered Bertha.

"I won't," was the submissive reply, and he closed his eyes and tried to sleep once more.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AT THE POINT OF THE SWORD.

A week passed.

Moses Bluff improved rapidly, his wound proving to be of a nature that was quick to heal. He was able to sit up now, and accepted the ministrations of his fair nurse with a smile of pleasure.

In this time these two had grown to be friends—this terrible Union ranger and fair Southern rebel.

Bertha was still a bitter little fire-eater, but between her and Bluff, politics had been discussed only in a temperate manner.

"Some Southerners may feel that they are right in this war. I will not condemn all," the youth was wont to say. "Your uncle and aunt have been very kind to me, and I am willing to concede pure motives to such as they."

The boom of guns and crack of conflict had not been heard in the neighborhood of the farm-house since the eventful time when Fisher's Hill rang with the crash of arms.

No foraging or plundering parties had passed the house, and it seemed that peace and quiet were to once more reign in this part of the valley.

One morning, while Bertha was at work in the frcnt room, setting things to rights, as her aunt expressed it, she was a little startled at hearing the clatter of hoofs down the flinty Virginia road.

Quickly she went to the window and peered out.

A dozen horsemen were coming, and they soon reined up before the house.

These men wore the Confederate gray, a color that was entirely pleasing in the eye of Bertha McVane.

She stood in the open door-way when the leader of the troop came up the walk, hat in hand, and a smile wreathing his dark face.

"Still here, Bertha. I am glad you are well and unharmed. I feared you might have suffered from the raids of these Yankee banditti, who are spreading desolation far and near through the Shenandoah Valley"

It was Colonel Trafton who thus addressed the maiden.

"I am happy to meet you, colonel," uttered the girl "How is the conflict going?"

"As it should. Sheridan is retreating. Our army will follow him back to the Potomac, perhaps into Maryland. Before snow flies, Pennsylvania will be at the feet of the South; that is my prediction."

"I hope you may prove a wise prophet," answered the girl, with glowing eyes; at the same time she thought of her patient up stairs, who had been wounded fighting for the old flag.

What would Colonel Trafton say did he know of him?

"You have an invalid soldier under this roof, I understand?" the colonel said.

"You have not been misinformed, colonel."

"A Yankee soldier, too?"

"Again you are right."

"May I inquire why your uncle has been so indiscreet, to say the least, as to harbor an enemy to the South?"

"Pure humanity prompted him, colonel. We ought not to sink our humanity in our partisanship."

"Indeed!" he sneered. "I cannot see that humanity should prompt Orvin Clymore to turn his house into a Yankee hospital. Can it be that it is to save his property that the old man has changed his coat?"

"For shame, Colonel Trafton!"

"It looks that way, anyhow."

"My uncle would die sooner than renounce allegiance to the Confederacy," cried Bertha, the indignant color staining her cheeks.

At this moment Mr. Clymore appeared on the scene, and Bertha fled back to the parlor.

The Confederate colonel grasped the farmer warmly by the hand; then, after the first greetings were over, began questioning him regarding his guest.

"Yes, we have a Yankee under our roof who was wounded in the fight on Fisher's Hill. I did not want the fellow here, neither did my wife, but Bertha and the captain pleaded so hard——"

"The captain?" Trafton interrupted.

"Captain Chetwood."

A dark look overspread the Confederate colonel's face at mention of that name.

It seemed that this odious Union captain was popping up on all occasions to annoy him especially.

"So Captain Chetwood and Bertha united their appeals," growled the colonel. "I would like very much to look upon this prisoner who has carried everybody as by storm. Will you permit it, Mr. Clymore?"

"Certainly," answered the obliging farmer, never once suspecting what a row he was about to create under his own roof.

The doughty colonel followed Mr. Clymore up the stairs, and soon they entered the room above, occupied by the wounded Virginia ranger.

Moses Bluff sat in an old-fashioned rocker, near a low window that overlooked the back yard. He had not seen the troopers ride up; but had heard their voices, and knew that a party of soldiers had halted at the farm-house.

The moment the farmer and his companion crossed the threshold of his room, "Loyal Mose" looked about and fixed his eyes on Colonel Trafton.

Half-way across the floor the colonel halted, a look of surprise, of infernal joy on his face.

"Mose Bluff!"

And with the words, uttered in a hissing voice, Colonel Trafton drew his sword.

"Colonel Trafton!"

White as death had grown the face of the wounded soldier, as he looked once more in the face of the man he hated with a hatred that was deadly in its nature.

Moses Bluff rose from his chair.

He was not armed, but he did not flinch from the danger that menaced.

"Colonel Trafton—murderer! at last we meet!" cried the young soldier, in a voice husky with emotion, while his attenuated frame trembled like a leaf in the storm.

Without noticing the epithet, the colonel turned to the astonished farmer.

"Were you aware, sir, whom you have entertained, fed, and coddled during the past ten days?"

"A Unionist, I admit."

"But his name?"

"I have never asked it."

"I thought so. Then know that this man—this wretch whom your hospitality has clothed, fed, and cared for so tenderly, is Moses Bluff, a man who has done more to terrorize the people of this valley than the worst of Sheridan's rough riders. A traitor to his State and country, he has remorsely slaughtered friends and neighbors; burning, murdering, and destroying—a fiend most horrible. Women and children tremble at mention of his name, as well they may. Helpless beings may well fear this wretch, who has thus far managed to keep his precious carcass outside our lines. But he is in my power now, and I will see that he commits no more depredations —murders no more women and children!"

The colonel, who had now worked himself into a

furious passion, now advanced with naked sword raised aloft.

Mr. Clymore stood staring helplessly at the two men. He had heard of Moses Bluff, and believed the colonel had not enlarged in the least on the man's villainy; and to think that he had sheltered and fed such a wretch during the ten days just passed. No wonder the old farmer was quite dumb with amazement and horror for the time.

The hollow eyes of the invalid soldier did not flinch in their concentrated gaze into the dark face of the rebel raider.

"Ezra Trafton, you have lied most villainously about me, and you know it. I am not a traitor, as you are, to the country that gave me birth. This is the State of Washington, the founder and father of our common country. He fought eight long years to establish the government and the flag for which I am willing to lay down my life——"

"For which you shall die, youngster," hissed Colonel Trafton, holding his hand for the moment, in spite of himself.

"My personal wrongs I consider secondary to love for the Union," pursued Moses Bluff. "You accuse me of treason, of murder. Ah! Colonel Trafton, you knew when those words left your lips that you uttered lies, base, infernal lies, that came from a corrupt heart for a corrupt purpose. I brand you, Colonel Trafton, not only a liar, but a traitor and a coward as well!"

Weak with his whirling passions evoked by the presence and words of his enemy, Moses Bluff reeled and sank into his chair, where a moment later the point of Trafton's sword was raised to pierce his loyal heart!

CHAPTER XIX.

BERTHA'S VICTORY.

Above the weak and helpless form in the chair the colonel towered, the point of his naked sword pressed against the palpitating breast of his enemy.

"Thus do I rid the world of a traitor to Virginia!" hissed Trafton, as he gripped his sword for the fatal stroke.

"Strike, coward!"

"Loyal Mose" lay back, white, yet with the fires of hatred and defiance flaming from his eyes.

"Hold! in the name of mercy!"

A clear yet soft voice filled their ears.

A hand was laid on the shoulder of Colonel Trafton, and he was turned about to find himself confronted by Bertha McVane.

"Ah! it is you, Bertha!" uttered the colonel, forcing a smile, and taking a step backward from his victim. "This is no place for you."

"What were you about to do, Colonel Trafton?" the girl demanded, sharply, piercing the guilty man through with her clear, questioning black orbs.

"To do?" he stammered, falling back in confusion. "I—perhaps you do not know this man;" and the colonel's long forefinger pointed toward the Unionist in the chair.

"I am pretty well acquainted with the young man," was the rapidly uttered answer.

"Ah, Bertha, you have made a woeful mistake in permitting this man, this—this——"

"Traitor! I know what you would say, Colonel Trafton," uttered Bertha, as he seemed at a loss for words to finish his sentence. "This man has espoused

the cause of the Union from conviction! I never quarrel with any one on account of his conviction. In the old flag he sees the emblems of Union, of liberty, and justice. When a man can read all this in the flag, how can I blame him for carrying his convictions to the battle-field? No, Colonel Trafton, I honor the man, such a man as dare stand for what he, in the very depths of his soul, believes to be right."

She paused then, and stepped to the side of the chair, laying one small brown palm upon the glossy black hair that shadowed the white face of the wounded Union soldier.

A frown, black as a thunder-cloud, swept the face of the colonel.

"It has gone so far as this, eh?" uttered Trafton. "This young renegade has actually converted the daughter of a McVane, a South Carolinian at that, to the cause of the Union. Well—well——"

"That will do, sir!"

The girl's pride was in arms at once.

"I am a believer in Southern rights!" cried Bertha. "I feel that we of the South are right in this war, and ought to succeed, but I am not so blind and bigoted as to denounce all who uphold the North as traitors and outlaws. Partisanship goes too far at times; but even you, Colonel Trafton, shall not impugn my motives, or proclaim me false to principle, simply because I can see that a foe may possess a motive as honest as my own."

"Bravely spoken!" uttered "Loyal Mose;" "but that man has not soul enough to appreciate your position."

"By Heaven! this looks suspicious!" cried the colonel, trembling with rage and jealousy. "Mr. Clymore, have you been blind to this—this——"

"You need not finish the sentence, Colonel Trafton," uttered Miss McVane. "You have no right to

speak as you do. I have simply defended a man you would, in your unwise patriotism, have murdered. While under this roof he shall be protected;" and Bertha turned a look upon her uncle that caused him to look confused, and a bit uneasy.

"Yes," finally articulated the farmer; "as we have accepted this man, and agreed to care for him until able to leave, I am sure he ought to be protected."

"I am surprised that you should wish to protect one who has no right to honorable treatment. Bertha, were you aware that this man you have coddled and nursed is Moses Bluff the traitor?"

If he expected to see her start and grow pale, he was sadly disappointed.

"I am aware that he has been so designated by one party, while the Yankees are pleased to speak of him as "Loyal Mose." I know all you would say, colonel, of the fearful outrages, and all that, but in times like these people are given to exaggeration, and, on talking the matter over candidly with Mr. Bluff, I find that he is entirely innocent of the charges preferred against him by the partisan press of Virginia."

An oath fell from the lips of Colonel Trafton.

He was quite beside himself now.

"The people of the Shenandoah Valley are anxious to learn of the death of Traitor Mose, and I will not let this chance slip through my fingers—he must die!"

Again Colonel Trafton advanced upon the helpless man in the arm-chair.

"He shall not die!" she exclaimed.

"Stand aside, Bertha!" commanded the Confederate colonel. "People would never forgive me; even Mosby, whom we all love, would drive me from his command in disgrace did he know that Traitor Mose was in my power and I permitted him to escape. No! though angels plead, I would not spare the life of this man!"

"Back! You shall not murder him!"

Straight as an Indian, the little form of Bertha was drawn, confronting the colonel—her betrothed husband.

"Bertha, are you resolved on creating a scene?" demanded the colonel, sternly.

"I am resolved on saving you from a crime, Ezra."

"This is foolish. This is foolish. Mr. Clymore, please remove your niece from the room—I must do my duty."

"Bertha, perhaps it is best," uttered the bewildered old man.

Bertha paid no heed to the words of her uncle.

The door of the farmer's house had been opened to receive the young Union ranger, and while under the roof—her uncle's—the youth should not be harmed if she could prevent it.

Mrs. Clymore was away from home to-day, visiting a neighbor, and therefore did not come in for a share in the scene.

Silent as the dead, Moses Bluff sat, watching with feelings too intense for utterance, the contest going on between this brave woman and the cowardly colonel.

His young heart was overflowing with gratitude, but there was no time for expressions of this kind now.

"Aside with you, girl!" cried Colonel Trafton, angrily, at the same time advancing and laying a hand on the arm of the defiant Bertha.

Quickly one fair hand sought the folds of her dress; the next moment it came forth, and Colonel Trafton started back with a cry of rage and alarm, as a revolver muzzle gleamed in his face.

"Time for argument has ceased," uttered Bertha, without a tremor in her voice. "You have been unreasonable, Ezra Trafton. I have pleaded with you in vain, and now I propose to open the fight with this.

Attempt to harm this man, who is under our protection, and, as true as I live, I will shoot you dead!"

The girl's face became ashen in hue, and her eyes seemed to dilate as she uttered these words with a cocked pistol leveled at the breast of her betrothed.

It was a strange position, indeed, but Bertha McVane held what she deemed sacred duty above love, on this occasion, and it may be that the latter feeling was not so strong in her heart as it had been in times past.

Colonel Trafton was a prudent man.

He remembered the broad acres, the numerous city blocks belonging to the McVanes, and realized that it would not do to go too far.

Of a sudden he broke into an amused laugh.

"High tragedy, indeed!" he uttered. "Well, Bertha, since you are so determined, I will give over my claims, and suffer the traitor to live; but we shall meet again ere long, Moses Bluff; then look well to yourself."

With these words, the colonel strode from the room.

"What think you now of the colonel's courage?"

This question Bluff put to Bertha some minutes later, after he had expressed his gratitude in words that were burning.

"Hush, Moses, do not ask me," uttered Bertha, in a low tone.

Her face was pale, and she seemed deeply troubled over the events of the day.

In a little time she went below, and some time later the Confederate party dashed away.

Perhaps ten minutes had passed, when something caught the eye of "Loyal Mose" that caused him to fix his gaze on the barn, beyond the negro huts.

What was it?

Smoke, followed immediately by a red tongue of flame.

The barn was on fire?

CHAPTER XX.

THE BURNING BARN.

"Fire! fire! fire!"

It was this cry from the chamber window that startled the inmates of the farm-house.

Though weak, and doubly so from his excitement, consequent upon meeting Colonel Trafton, Moses Bluff was yet strong enough to break a square of glass from the window and shout fire through the opening.

Almost instantly the utmost confusion prevailed.

But few negroes remained on the place, and when these came rushing to the barn, the great building was one sea of flame.

"Too late—too late!"

Like one bereft of sense and feeling, Orvin Clymore stood, with white face and wide-open eyes, staring at the burning barn.

"The horses—save the horses!"

This was the cry that fell from the lips of Bertha.

She hastened toward the barn, but a loud voice bade her halt.

In her excitement she had noticed the approach of strangers, and therefore knew not of the presence of Captain Chetwood, until he dashed up to her side on a foaming steed.

At his back rode a score of blue-coats, members of the Loyal Tigers, who had come to look after their old commander.

Two of the rangers dismounted, and rushed into the hot stables, and at great risk, succeeded in saving the two horses belonging to the farmer.

The barn was gone, with all its grain and hay—a severe loss, indeed.

Captain Chetwood remained near the burning pile for some time, directing movements for preventing the spread of the fire.

This was no easy task.

Great brands were hurled by the wind through the air, and alighting on the roofs of the outhouses, ignited them as though they were composed of powder.

There was plenty of water in a cistern near, and with buckets found on the premises, the rangers managed to save the farmer's house and surroundings from sharing the fate of the barn.

For more than an hour this fight with the fire fiend prevailed.

After all danger was past, Captain Chetwood walked to the house and confronted Bertha, the farmer being too greatly prostrated at his loss to feel able to meet and converse with strangers then.

The captain's face was flushed, his hair singed from his fight with the flames.

Bertha met him at the door.

"It is not necessary for you to remain long, sir," cried the maiden, fiercely. "Perhaps, though, you intended to give my uncle's house to the flames also?"

The captain looked his astonishment.

This was a reception he little expected, after the herculean work he had put in to save the house from destruction.

"I certainly have no desire to burn the house after these men and I have worked so hard to save it," answered the captain, quickly.

"A hot job," growled one of the rangers, who stood near. "I wouldn't a fit fire fur no reb, ef the boss hadn't been keered fur here. Them as is kind to Moses is our friends, let 'em fight on which side they will."

This was a sentiment that Bertha ought to have appreciated, but just then she was laboring under a

mistaken idea, and all her wrath was directed against Captain Chetwood and his companions.

"Captain Chetwood, at last you have succeeded in destroying my uncle's property. I once imagined you too magnanimous, or rather too much of a Christian to countenance this barbarous war waged by Sheridan and his underlings against women and children; but I now see that I was mistaken."

"Bertha, what are you saying?" cried the captain. "I'm not a barbarian, neither am I a savage. Wherein have I offended you?"

He was laughing at her, and she realized it with a new burst of anger.

"Hypocrite!"

"There, Miss McVane, that will do," assuming a sudden sternness not usual with him when addressing a woman. "You seem to wish to abuse me for saving property, and perhaps life, that was of no interest to me whatever—the property of an enemy."

"Again I must repeat my expression—hypocrite!" uttered the fair Confederate, with an emphasis not to be mistaken.

"You are pleased to be severe, cutting. Do you imagine that I set fire to your uncle's barn?"

"I do."

"Your perceptive faculties are too sharp, Miss McVane. I was certainly a long way from here when that fire was started."

"Not far, I am sure. You appeared on the scene about the same time we noticed the fire."

"And so you connected me with this incendiarism?"

"How could I do otherwise?"

The captain's yellow mustache was raised in a smile.

"What a fiery little creature you are, Bertha. I solemnly assure you that I had no more to do with starting that fire than the Bey of Tunis."

"Nor these men?"

"Nor these men, Bertha;" and there was a look in his blue eyes that assured her he was speaking the truth.

"Forgive me, Royal, if I have wronged you; the fire may have been the result of carelessness on the part of the negroes, they are such lazy, good-for-nothing creatures. Since your President declared them free, uncle has been unable to make them work as they used. It's a shame to rob us—not only of slaves, but of the substance of the land, too. Ah! there will come a fearful retribution on the North some day—there surely will, Captain Chetwood."

She was waxing warm again, as the wrongs of the South seemed to loom up mountain high before her excited imagination.

He stroked his mustache thoughtfully.

"Bertha, you are a woman of sense; now let me propound a few questions."

"Very well."

"Who began this war?"

"The North, by electing a sectional President," she said, quickly. "Ask me something more difficult to answer, please."

A quizzical expression shot from his eyes.

"It would be easy enough to answer in that way," he said. "I don't think I'll ask you any more questions. I wish to see Moses Bluff. How is he, Bertha?"

"Improving."

She led the way quickly to the room occupied by the wounded soldier, and then left the two captains together for a time.

Bluff was anxious to be in the saddle once more.

His wound had not proved a bad one, but he was not yet strong enough to take the field.

When the young ranger related the story of Colonel Trafton's visit but a short time before, and the

scene which followed, Captain Chetwood evinced the deepest interest.

His eye kindled when Bluff told of Bertha's brave act in saving his life.

"That girl is a heroine, Royal. She has a mind of her own, without being strong-minded, she is an impetuous Southern sympathizer, and is ready to die for her convictions. Royal, if I was good-looking and smart, as you are, I would try and win that girl. She will make some man a noble wife."

"No doubt of it," answered Captain Chetwood, thoughtfully; "but——"

Then he paused suddenly. He was on the point of saying that she was engaged to Colonel Trafton. He caught his words in time, however.

"What were you about to say?"

"That I must be on the move. I would like to capture this Colonel Trafton."

"You would hang him then. No—no, captain, you must leave him to me. Spare the villain for my vengeance."

"I may not meet him."

Just then considerable commotion was manifest outside. The rangers were anxious to see their captain, and Moses Bluff appeared at the window, which Chetwood opened.

The appearance of the white, boyish face at the window brought forth a ringing cheer from the score of blue-coats below. Hats were taken off and swung high in the air.

"Ah! the boys love their leader—God bless them!" muttered "Loyal Mose," with a moist light in his black eyes.

At this moment, however, a hoarse cry filled the air, then came the crack of carbines, and the road, both to the north and south, was discovered swarming with mounted Confederates.

CHAPTER XXI.

BERTHA AND THE MAJOR.

One glance from the window showed the Union captain that his little party of rangers were outnumbered more than fifty to one by the Confederates.

Moses Bluff uttered a low cry of alarm.

"My soul! Captain Chetwood, you are in for it now; these are Mosby's men, and not noted for their magnanimity," uttered the young ranger, in a tone that expressed the deepest alarm for the safety of his friend.

By this time the air rang with the sharp reports of carbines, as the rebels poured in an enfilading fire upon the little band of Unionists in front of the house.

"Quick! for the love of mercy—escape while you can!" cried Moses Bluff, turning to Captain Chetwood.

"And leave you?"

"Leave me. I am in no danger."

Thus urged, Captain Chetwood turned from the window and hurried away. He dashed down the stairs, and was soon in the saddle, where the bullets were pattering in a lively manner.

Ping! ping! ping!

The leaden pellets cut the air, some of them burying themselves in the house, while others whistled through the trees, severing twigs and leaves.

By the time Captain Chetwood had gained the saddle the rangers were mounted, and sending answering shots into the face of the foe.

The Confederates were closing in rapidly, and would soon surround the little party. If they would escape they must make a move right quickly.

"Across the field to the woods, boys!" cried the captain, loudly.

Quickly the rangers wheeled their horses and gave them the rein.

"Halt thar!"

"Surrender, Yankees!"

Our friends paid no heed to the loud calls of the guerrilla raiders, but dashed away over the field toward the woods.

The guerrillas were soon racing over the open ground, firing and yelling like Indians.

Captain Chetwood rode in the rear of his command, and just before entering the woods he turned about and sent back a shot which emptied one saddle.

Then the captain's horse leaped a fence and entered the woods.

A volley of leaden pellets cut the bushes and twigs about him, but without any damage.

An officer rode at the head of the pursuing party, and once, concealed by the bushes, Captain Chetwood faced about, glanced along his revolver, and fired.

The officer fell with a bullet in his brain.

The result of the captain's shot brought a yell of rage from the pursuers.

A second volley was fired, and one of the rangers received a wound; but the little party scattered through the woods and were soon lost to view.

The pursuit was soon at an end.

Two of the rangers were slain, and several had received wounds as a result of the fight.

The larger portion of the Confederate raiders halted at the farm-house, and one who wore a major's straps, demanded food for his men and horses.

Bertha pointed to the smoking ruins of the barn.

"All the food we had for horses was there. It has but just been destroyed. What more can you ask?"

"Upon my soul, young lady, I'm extremely sorry,

so I am," replied the Confederate officer, no other than Major de Banyan, whom we have lost sight of since that fearful railroad accident during the first few weeks of the war.

"No more so than we, who have, indeed, suffered heavily."

"Faith, thin, would it be asking too much for the least bit of refreshment. Sure it's a hot day, so it is, and I'm that fagged that the wing bone of a fowl wouldn't go amiss."

"Please walk in, and we will do our best for you, sir."

"Oh, major," whispered the officer to himself, "what a boy ye are among the ladies. Sure, this one's a charmer."

Bertha took him into the cool dining-room, through the open windows of which came the sweet smell of fragrant flowers.

"Did you catch the name of the officer who commanded the Yankee divils we scattered from here just now?"

"Captain Chetwood, I believe."

"Oh, indeed; faith, I thought it was that rascal they call "Loyal Mose." It's him we're in search of."

Bertha began to feel uneasy.

"What will be his fate if you take him?"

"Death, sure—the death of a traitor. Faith, me orders are to hang him higher than Haman of old."

"Is he such a terrible fellow?" she said, spreading out the hasty repast on the table, which the major eyed with avidity.

"Is it possible ye haven't heard of this desperate rascal?"

"Oh, yes—but I am sure he isn't as bad as he's painted."

"Faith, he's twice as bad, and divil a lie am I telling you," said Major de Banyan, with his mouth full.

"What sort of a person is he?" inquired Bertha, anxiously. "Have you ever seen him?"

"Sure, I haven't. He's a young fellow, they tell me. A regular fire-eater, be the powers! If he were only an Irishman, now, I'd have some respect for the divil."

"You say he's in the neighborhood?"

"He was last seen not a thousand miles from here, me jewel."

"It is to be hoped you will capture such a desperate character."

"Faith, I hope so myself. It would be quite a feather in my cap, do you mind. Mosby would give a good deal to get him in limbo, so he would."

"Do you like pie—I beg your pardon, I don't know your name."

"Me name, is it? Major de Banyan at your service, ma'am."

"Happy to make your acquaintance, major," she said, with a smile.

"Do you mind that, now?" said de Banyan, to himself. "Ah, Phelim, me boy, what a divil ye are among the girls."

Then he remembered her question.

"Do I like pie, did ye say? Faith, I do. Is it a meat pie?"

"No," she said, laughing; "custard."

"Sure then, I've a soft spot for custard, so I have. I'll try just the smallest bit in the world," and he helped himself to half of it.

At this moment the farmer appeared, and began talking with the major.

Bertha trembled lest the old man should reveal the fact that Moses was under his roof at that very moment. He had not heard the conversation between his niece and the major, and was therefore not posted with regard to the situation.

"You have no objection to our searching the house, I suppose?" said the major, after a time.

"None whatever," answered the farmer. "The Yankees have about ruined me, and nothing worse can happen."

"Except they take your life, sure."

"I am not sure but that would prove a blessing," was the old farmer's lugubrious rejoinder.

The major, at the head of half a dozen of his men, began a search of the house.

Perhaps the officer did not believe the farmer a Confederate sympathizer, and wished to satisfy himself.

"They will find our guest—Mr. Bluff," uttered Bertha, in a low tone, to her uncle. "If they learn who he is, the poor fellow will be murdered."

"Ah, Heaven!" groaned Orvin Clymore, "I am nearly distracted. If any more blood is shed I shall die."

"Hist! Here they come. Leave all to me," whispered Bertha, who at heart a stanch Southerner, was not ready to see Moses Bluff murdered in his helplessness.

At the top of the stairs Bertha stood when Major de Banyan ascended.

"My brother is in yonder room. He was at Fisher's Hill, and was wounded; you will not disturb him?"

"I will see him, at any rate," said the major, and Bertha was forced to conduct him to the presence of the young Unionist.

Unfortunately, Bluff's nether limbs were incased in pantaloons, and the color at once attracted the eye of Major de Banyan, and excited his suspicions at the same time.

"So, ho! young man, you are one of Sheridan's rough riders, eh?"

"I never deny——"

A warning look from Bertha cut short the Unionist's words.

"You never deny the truth, eh?" cried the major, quickly, at the same time drawing his sword.

"My brother was with Early's troops at Fisher's Hill," said Bertha. "Tom would tell you about it, but he is not very strong yet——"

"A pretty story," sneered the major, touching the blue breeches with the point of his sword. "Upon me word, I believe this man to be a Unionist, and, faith, I am going to take him out of this house. I think we can find proof enough of his identity. If we do——"

"Well, sir?" questioned the young Unionist, his dark eyes flashing, all his youthful blood on fire.

"We will hang you to one of these trees, so we will!"

"Magnanimous, but——"

"Do not excite yourself, Tom," cried Bertha, quickly, fearing lest the youth should betray himself by intemperate language. "The major is a gentleman, and will not disgrace our cause by persecuting a wounded boy."

It was an artful speech, and had its effect.

Major de Banyan, however, could not get the blue breeches out of his mind, and he questioned Moses regarding them.

"The result of a foraging expedition, major," answered the young ranger, his gaze going from the officer to the crowd of troopers outside.

Captain Chetwood had escaped, and he felt happy, even though his own position was not a safe one.

"This may be, but I think I will examine your clothing and this room a little, and see what we shall see, faith!"

When the major would have laid hands on Bluff rudely, Bertha suddenly confronted him, a gleaming revolver in her hand.

"Major, stand back," in a low, yet determined voice. "To war on wounded boys and women is not the mission of true soldiers of the South. My brother will take the field soon, but now he must not be disturbed, and his life endangered. Sheridan is ravaging the valley. Why don't you meet him and drive him trom the country! For shame! that a Southern gentleman should stoop to do a mean action. Go, major, and my blessing, and that of all good friends of the South will accompany you to the field of battle. Your place is not here."

Major de Banyan realized that she spoke the truth.

"Give me a kiss, me jewel, and I'll let the boy go," he cried, with a laugh; and to the astonishment of Bluff, the girl permitted the major to press a kiss upon her cheek. Then the officer turned away without a word.

Soon the tramp of his departed troops died away in the distance. Bertha McVane had once again saved the life of "Loyal Mose," the terror of the Shenandoah Valley.

CHAPTER XXII.

ON THE EVE OF BATTLE.

Knowing that the Confederates had been severely punished, Sheridan believed it would be safe for him to visit Washington, and, accordingly, he left his army posted on the hills near Middletown and repaired to the capital.

Sheridan's visit to Washington came near proving fatal to his army, as after events proved.

Longstreet had been sent to reinforce Early with twelve thousand men, and the Confederate commander began to feel that he was able to take the offensive once more.

The Union Army was posted on three moderate hills, extending for three miles across the country, each one a little back of the other.

The first and foremost one, some four or five miles north of Fisher's Hill, was held by the Army of West Virginia, under Crook; the second, half a mile to the rear of this, by the Nineteenth Corps, under Emory, the turnpike running between them. The third and last, still farther back, was occupied by the Sixth Corps, with Torbert's superb cavalry covering its right flank.

The Confederate commander heard that Sheridan was in Washington, and at once resolved to attack his army before his return.

On the night of the eighteenth of October, the Confederates crossed the mountains which separate the branches of the Shenandoah, and forded the north fork, marching in five columns.

There was a dense fog at the time, wrapping everything in impenetrable darkness; but Early knew the ground thoroughly, and, with trusty guides, was in no danger of being misled.

He ordered all the men to leave their canteens behind, lest their clanking against the shanks of the bayonets should be heard by the Union pickets and give the alarm.

His march was to be noiseless, and he directed that all orders should be given in a low tone, for although the movement was to be made with an army of thirty thousand men, it must be made with the utmost secrecy to insure success.

Discovery would be fatal.

The whole enterprise was hazardous beyond expression.

The Confederates, however, moved off toward the Union left unperceived, though, about two o'clock in the morning, some of the pickets on duty reported they heard a heavy, muffled tramp and rustling

through the underbrush, as though a multitude was marching along the front.

This information caused some precautions to be taken, but no reconnaissance was sent out.

The truth is, a serious attack by Early was not dreamed of, and the main army slumbered on, wholly unsuspicious of danger.

All this time the steady columns were sweeping on through the gloom, now pushing through the dripping trees, and now fording a stream—skirting the Union position for miles—till at length, an hour before daybreak, Early's troops, shivering with the cold, stood within six hundred yards of their enemy's camp.

It was now the morning of the nineteenth.

This was to be a memorable day—one to be written in characters of blood upon the pages of American history.

Captain Royal Chetwood was with the army now.

Although he had ostensibly acted with the cavalry, yet, he was now, as was his regiment, a part of the infantry force under Crook, the corps destined to receive the first shock of battle on this memorable day.

The gallant Pennsylvanian had heard nothing from his young friend, "Loyal Mose," since the day of their meeting in the farmer's house, when a portion of Mosby's band made that sudden attack.

He believed that Bluff had escaped death, and would yet appear upon the field of strife.

On the night of the eighteenth, Captain Chetwood's command was resting peacefully under the autumnal stars, little dreaming of the fate in store for many of them ere the rising of another sun.

It was long past midnight when Captain Chetwood had left his tent and wandered forth into the night.

Somehow, he could not sleep.

Restless, full of uneasy thoughts, he resolved to

take a turn in the night air, and banish his uneasy feelings if possible.

In a little time he gained a spot just without the line, and stood in the cover of some trees.

Darkness everywhere, a dense, damp fog hanging over the hills.

The solemn stillness of the night was oppressive.

The captain leaned against a tree and listened.

It seemed as though he would hear the hoot of an owl, or the cry of a night-hawk, as had often been the case, when he stood watching and waiting for deer, in his own Pennsylvania woods in the long ago, when but a boy in his teens.

No hoot of owl, or cry of night-bird fell on his stained senses.

The silence was burdensome.

Instead of feeling relieved by the damp dews of heaven on his brow, Captain Chetwood felt more oppressed than ever.

"Ugh! this is awful. I will take a turn down yonder aways. Mayhap I may run upon something to attract my attention, to withdraw my thoughts from —Bertha and her lover."

Ah, yes, that was his trouble.

This was the first acknowledgment he had made even to himself.

He walked away into the fog.

He had gone perhaps twenty rods when he came to a sudden halt.

He had passed a sentinel on his beat, passed him in the fog without being discovered, and now stood many yards beyond the outpost.

The sound of steps fell on the captain's ear.

Tramp—tramp!

Stock-still the Union captain stood and listened.

He could not be mistaken. That muffled sound could be nothing else, nothing but the tramp of men.

They were not Federals.

What then was the meaning of this muffled tramp along the Union front?

The question sent a startled thrill to the heart of the captain.

The enemy was coming—coming under cover of fog and night to surprise the sleeping army.

Again Royal Chetwood listened. He was no alarmist, and did not wish to arouse the sleeping camp without good reason.

The tramping sound had suddenly ceased.

Another sound struck the startled ear of the young captain, however, that convinced him that he had made no mistake.

It was a metallic clink that was not new to his ears. There could be no doubt now of the truth—the enemy were moving in force upon the sleeping camp.

Quickly Captain Chetwood turned about to retrace his steps, his revolver drawn in his hand, ready to fire and give the alarm the moment he should gain the Union outpost.

He did not carry his intentions into execution.

A crash sounded almost at his side.

The next instant a dark form stood up almost gigantic in stature, disputing the captain's pathway to the Union lines.

Chetwood would have avoided the man if possible, but he soon discovered that this was not to be.

"Friend or ——?" questioned the captain, in a whisper, at the same time raising his revolver.

For answer the stranger hurled himself with staggering force upon the captain.

This decided the identity at once.

Captain Chetwood found himself clasped in the arms of a giant.

With a crash, both men went to the ground in a furious struggle for the mastery.

It was a silent struggle.

Neither man cared to rouse the enemy by unneces-

sary noise, and, therefore, the deadly struggle continued almost in silence.

The man was evidently one of the enemy's scouts, prying about to ascertain the condition of things in the Union camp.

He had encountered his match in the Union captain, however.

Chetwood managed to break the giant's hold as they fell, and, turning him, he came on top.

Quickly Captain Chetwood brought his revolver into use as a bludgeon, soon beating the Confederate scout into insensibility.

Leaving him where he had fallen, Chetwood moved quickly toward the Union capm, but not half the distance had he gone when an ear-splitting yell welled up along the hill, followed by the crash of rushing feet and crack of musketry.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A STUNNING SURPRISE.

Back to the Union camp went Captain Chetwood with the fleetness of a deer.

From ten thousand throats a deafening yell went up through the misty depths beyond the Union lines, and this was followed almost instantly with the crash and flash of musketry.

> "The shout
> Of battle now began, and rushing sound
> Of onset ended soon each milder thought."

The surprise was complete, and the panic frightful. The roll of drums, bugle calls, and shouts of officers arose on every side, and the troops rushed frantically to arms; but before any line of battle could be

formed, the shouting, clamorous foe were upon them.

" Hark to the trump and the drum,
And the mournful sound of the barbarous horn,
And the flap of the banners that flit as they're borne;
And the neigh of the steed, and the multitude's hum,
And the clash and the shout: 'They come—they come!' "

Without a moment's check or hindrance, they swept like a billow up and over the hill and over the breastworks.

Here a partial line for resistance was formed, and here stood Captain Chetwood, with pistol in one hand and sword in the other, rallying his men to meet the unexpected onset.

"Stand, boys, stand, and give them lead!" shouted the captain.

The brave Unionists did stand, holding the post for a brief time, returning the enemy's fire with a vengeance.

But the volleys of musket balls were like rain, and the thin line of infantry went down in swathes.

Captain Chetwood stood alone, almost, at the front.

Grim faces glared at him through fog and smoke.

A long line of gray swept forward, with guns and bayonets gleaming, the earth trembling under their tread, the sky rent with their victorious yells.

"My soul! must this be?" cried Captain Chetwood, as he found himself borne back by the onset.

From the breastworks the Unionists were swept, after a five minutes' stand, as chaff before the wind.

On came the billows of gray, on and on, in one irresistible, swelling tide.

It was grand.

To see, as the day began to break, those gray columns sweeping all before them over the hill, into the valley, and along the turnpike.

The Army of West Virginia became a herd of fugi-

tives, fleeing in wild disorder back toward the second hill, half a mile in the rear, where lay the Nineteenth Corps.

"Great Heaven! this is terrible!" shouted a Union colonel, riding madly along the front of the fleeing crowd. "Back, boys! this is disgraceful!"

The appeals of the officers had some effect, and several regiments rallied, and attempted once more to stay the tide of Confederate gray sweeping so majestically onward.

The lately beaten and apparently demoralized Confederate Army had suddenly assumed the offensive in a way that was without parallel in the history of war.

No wonder the Union generals were dumfounded, and utterly at a loss to understand how this could be.

And Sheridan, the soul of the army, was not here.

If the Union Army was defeated, the smiling fields of the North would once more be open to invasion, and the war would be prolonged indefinitely.

It was a momentous time indeed, and the destinies of millions hung in the balance on that nineteenth day of October.

But the surprise of the morning was so complete—so overwhelming, as to preclude hope of successful resistance.

As we have said, a few regiments were infused with life and courage enough to make a stand, and desperately attempted to turn back the tide of battle.

"Hold your ground, boys!"

It was Chetwood's cry, and his cool courage was soon infused into others. The flanking lines of gray were held in check for a brief moment, and leaden rain laid some of the enemy low as they pushed hotly upon the fragmentary lines of blue.

Crash, hiss, and roar.

The din was terrific.

Yells, curses and groans mingled with the crash of musketry on every hand.

This was not Fisher's Hill nor Winchester.

A defeated army was wrenching lost battles from the victorious foe, and turning the tide of victory the other way.

It was a bold, a splendid achievement on the part of Early's troops, and the laurels lately snatched from Confederate arms was about to return to them in the fullest measure possible.

For a few minutes the Unionists resisted the avalanche of gray along the turnpike.

Dead and wounded strewed the ground, marking the spot where their desperate efforts took place.

"Hold the ground! Hurrah!"

But shouts and words of cheer could not hold the handful of troops against a host, and breaking in wild disorder, the Unionists began rushing madly from the field of strife.

Captain Chetwood realized that the day was lost in that part of the field as he saw the men fleeing in wild haste.

On rushed the Confederates, and in the heat of the contest Captain Chetwood found himself confronted by a gleaming bayonet backed by a tall gray-coat.

With his sword the captain swept aside the bayonet, and then shot the man down with his revolver.

Almost on the instant the Union captain stumbled and fell to his knees, a bullet carrying his revolver from his hand as he went down.

Then a bayonet gleamed in his eyes.

A tall Georgian had thrust forward his gun, and was determined to make sure of the Union captain for certain now.

The Federals were fleeing like frightened sheep, and Captain Chetwood believed that his name would appear in the column devoted to the slain in the daily papers after to-day.

Spang!

A stunning report filled the ears of the Union captain.

The huge Southerner staggered, and the next instant fell, pierced through the heart by a bullet.

Quckly, Captain Chetwood jumped to his feet, to feel himself jerked by the collar backward, and almost forcibly dragged from the spot.

"This way; run like the devil, boss, or you'll lose yer grip and go under."

The speaker was tall and lean, an awkward countryman, whose smooth, sallow face and awkward movements, proclaimed him scarcely more than a boy in years.

It was this man, or boy, who had saved the captain's life.

The fellow's blue breeches flopped about his thin legs as a bag might over a bean-pole.

It was light enough now for the captain to see plainly, and he could scarcely repress an exclamation on discovering who his rescuer was. Such an awkward boy, to possess such masterly courage, when strong men were fleeing with terror on every hand.

"Run, boss, run!" cried the man—we will call him a man since he was past eighteen—"the rebs are coming."

"Who are you—you saved my life?" cried the captain.

"I'm an Ohio boy," answered the awkward soldier. "Mebbe you never heard of Deacon Potter?"

"Never!"

"Well, he's my dad just the same. I wan't good for nothin' at home, so I jined the army, one of the old regiments, and hev been trampin' up an' down these Virginny hills fur nigh a year. Come, come, boss; dig out, or the rebs'll git ye!"

The captain accelerated his speed, for he saw that

all hope for rallying the troops nearer than the hill occupied by the Nineteenth Corps was past.

Beside the tall young Ohioan the captain ran, among the moving mass of fugitives.

"That ar' reb come nigh gittin' the best of ye didn't he, boss?"

"Yes. You saved my life. I hope to know you better hereafter," answered the captain.

"I couldn't a done no different," said Potter. "Folks used to call me Lazy Andy up in Ohio, and a general good-for-nothin'! Seems 'm better'n a nobody here, eh, boss?"

CHAPTER XXIV.

STAMPEDE.

"A great deal better," answered Captain Chetwood, to the last remark of the Ohio youth. "You are as brave as a lion, and——"

"Now, look a here, colonel, this won't do. Andy Potter han't no great shakes, but he's goin' to do his level best ag'in the traitors. My father, ther deacon, didn't think the war was right, anyhow. He kinder sympathized with the South. He'n I used to have some big arguments, and, finally, the last time, dad pitched onto me and flailed me like sixty. I didn't resist, coz 'twouldn't look well for a boy to strike his dad, you know. I lit out shortly with mother's blessin'. I git letters from mother once in a while. She calls me—but, thunder! let's git out o' this, or we're gone suckers!"

The captain and his young friend had lagged in their gait, and the leaden pellets began to sing uncomfortably near their ears of a sudden, which brought forth this last exclamation from Andy Potter.

The twain quickened their pace, and soon found themselves in the neighborhood of the Nineteenth Corps, which had been warned by the yells and crash of musketry of the assault on the left, and was forming in line of battle to resist the onslaught of the foe.

In wild disorder Crook's troops fled down the turnpike, and through the fields and woods, hotly pursued by the foe.

"See 'em run—what fools!" cried Andy Potter, as he came to a halt on the hill-side, where the front of a Union brigade was forming in line for battle.

Crack—crack!

Along the crest of the hill puffs of smoke leaped up in spiteful jets, and leaden death messengers were hurled into the onrushing ranks of gray.

The long rifle of Andy Potter fell to his shoulder, and he fired with precision.

A gray-coat fell, pierced to the heart.

The gun and bayonet attached, borne by the youth from Ohio, was one he had had made to order, and was an accurate piece, and a breech-loader, which made it more effective than an ordinary musket.

"There goes another!" chuckled Potter, his eyes snapping.

There was little use attempting to hunt up his command now, and Captain Chetwood concluded to remain with the Nineteenth Corps, and assist this brave body of Unionists in stemming the tide of Early's victorious troops that was sweeping onward over the hills, and down the turnpike.

"Hold the hill, boys, and we will soon check these fellows!" cried Captain Chetwood, as he seized the musket of a fallen soldier and took his place in the ranks.

Beside him, his young face lighted with the ardor of battle, was Andy Potter, who was loading and firing with the coolness and precision of a veteran.

"A remarakble boy," thought Captain Chetwood,

who resolved to keep him in view during the day, if possible.

Along the slope the blaze of musketry was deafening, but above the roar of the strife arose the sharp screech of Early's veterans—the yell that our men had learned so well.

On they come, on and on, column after column of gray, an unending mass it seemed to the astonished Unionists, who, as yet, had barely got their eyes open.

"Hold the hill, boys! We must check them here, else all is lost!" shouted Captain Chetwood, loudly.

But, of a sudden, a new danger stared the men of the Nineteenth Corps in the face.

Without attempting to break the line of battle formed loosely by the remnants of the Federal Army, the enemy poured on down the turnpike, and would soon be in the rear of the troop composing the Nineteenth Corps.

"Heaven! we are to be surrounded!"

A panic seized the Unionists, and soon the ragged, ill-formed lines broke and were again in retreat.

A few guns were saved in the mad flight, but many were abandoned on the road, for the Confederates having gained a position on the flank of the Union troops, poured in a terrible fire from musket and field-piece.

There was no stemming the tide.

Soon the broken fragments of the Nineteenth Corps went in headlong flight toward the hill occupied by the Sixth Corps, where Wright was marshaling his troops to stay, if possible, the woeful wreck that Early had made in the front, and hold the enemy in check until the fleeing fugitives could be reformed, and brought into line of battle once more.

"What in tarnation are they runnin' for?" cried Andy Potter, as the blue-coats broke and dashed at a mad run from the hill.

"Because the others do, I suppose," answered Captain Chetwood, biting his lips with vexation.

"By gracious! I'd like to fight the hydra-heads, and send 'em back," cried Andy, refusing to stir, but loading and firing as before.

"Come!" cried Chetwood, quickly, laying his hand on the arm of his young friend. "You will be killed or captured if you remain here. Do you hear me?"

"Hang it! I hate like pizen to give up this way!" growled Potter, still holding his ground.

The captain and the young Ohioan stood almost alone now, with the yells of Gordon's victorious column ringing in their ears, the patter of leaden hail making most unpleasant music about their heads.

"Quick, boy—this is madness!"

The captain attempted to draw the youth forcibly from the spot.

On the instant, the young Ohioan fell to the ground, with blood gushing from a wound in the head.

"Ah, Heaven! he is dead!—killed by his own rashness," uttered Captain Chetwood, as he saw the blood gush in a crimson stream over the sallow face.

"Poor boy! By Heaven! they shall not have the body! I will rescue that or die in the attempt!"

This was a mad resolve on the part of Captain Chetwood, no doubt, but the boy had saved his life that morning, and the captain was warmly attached to him on that account.

Snatching the body in his arms, Captain Chetwood rushed away, followed by a shower of leaden pellets.

He left his musket, of course, and, with Andy Potter across his shoulder, sped down the slope and across the fields, almost as fleetly as he would have done had he been without a burden.

Soon he found himself surrounded by a seething mass of humanity, each individual factor striving to distance his neighbor in the race.

And such a race!

If I have a member of that army among my readers, he will bear me witness that there was something pertaining to the disgraceful in that mad flight, something akin to the madness that hurled our army in wild confusion upon Washington at an earlier day.

Who was to blame?

It is a question not in my province to answer.

"You fool! What you carryin' that stiff fur?"

Captain Chetwood looked into the face of a bronzed veteran, who was making for the rear, and had no time to halt, even while he opened his lips in speech.

The captain made no reply to this brutal remark, but kept on his way, and was soon beyond the hiss and clash of the bullets.

The hill on which the Sixth Corps was encamped was now reached.

The great mass of fugitives rushed on, regardless of every effort to rally them.

Wright at once formed a new line of battle, and attempted to check the fleeing mass in their frightful rush.

In a measure, the commander of the Sixth Corps succeeded, and for a short space of time the onset of Early was staid.

Captain Chetwood found himself under the shelter of a mountain oak, beyond the range of the conflict.

In fact, a lull had come for the time.

The Confederates were plundering the Union camps they had captured, and it gave the vanquished a breathing spell that was appreciated by the hard pressed boys in blue.

Captain Chetwood laid his burden on the grass, which was yet damp with the dews of night, and gazed sharply about him.

Not far away glittered the waters of a brook.

This was a welcome sight, as the canteen worn by the young soldier was empty.

Stripping this from the body, Captain Chetwoood hastened to fill it with cool water from the brook.

CHAPTER XXV.

COLONEL TRAFTON FALLS.

Chetwood had little expectation of rousing Andy Potter from the sleep which benumbed every limb.

He had placed his hand over the region of the heart, and discovered that life was not yet extinct, and it was this discovery which led the captain to work over the silent form with desperate energy.

The Ohio boy had saved his life once that morning, and it was no more than honest gratitude on his part to do what he could for the brave youth.

With water obtained from the brook, Captain Chetwood washed the blood from the face of Andy, and carefully examined the wound.

There was no fracture of the skull, the captain believed.

A bullet had swept along near the base of the brain, cutting the scalp badly, and causing a great flow of blood.

With his handkerchief, Captain Chetwood bound up the wound, which had now ceased to bleed.

A groan rewarded the efforts of the Union captain at length, and in a little time Andy Potter opened his eyes, and sat up with a great cry.

"The hydra-heads, where be they?" he cried, glaring about him in a fierce way, that told that the youth's mind was still on the conflict in which he came so near his death.

"You are safe, my brave boy, so don't alarm yourself," answered the captain, quickly.

There was a sound of guns on the left, though in

their present postition they were unable to see the conflict.

"The fight still goes on," muttered Andy Potter. "By gracious! colonel, I can't stand this," and the young Ohioan sprang to his feet, only to reel and sink back to earth, weak and fainting.

Yes, the boy had fainted, and lay once more a dead weight in the arms of Captain Chetwood.

"Poor boy!" murmured the captain. "The excitement was too much for him in his weak condition. I must see about getting him off the field, and to a place of safety. We are not safe here, as the enemy may sweep over this ground at any moment."

Seizing the fainting youth about the waist, Captain Chetwood was about to lift him from the ground, when a loud shout attracted his attention.

Releasing his burden, he crouched low, and clutched the revolver which he had found on the person of a dead officer but a short time before, his own having been, as the reader remembers, shot from his hand in the heat of battle.

A ringing cheer swept up from a partially wooded field to the right, and a squad of Confederate cavalry dashed across the open field, making toward the spot where the sound of conflict was still heard.

Captain Chetwood hoped to remain unseen, and, therefore, crouched very close to the ground.

About half way along the base of the hill had the cavalry passed, when an officer suddenly wheeled his horse from the line and rode directly toward the spot occupied by Captain Chetwood and his charge.

"Ah, that fellow chooses to rush upon his doom," uttered the Union captain, through close shut teeth.

On spurred the Confederate—an officer of rank, as the captain soon discovered.

Evidently, he was intent on gaining the summit of the hill for the purpose of taking observations.

With bated breath, Captain Chetwood awaited his approach.

"I will not shoot him down unawares," thought the Union captain. "I wouldn't mind securing that horse; he is a splendid animal. Ah! good heavens!"

Captain Chetwood had made a discovery.

The approaching officer had advanced so near that his face was plainly visible, and Captain Chetwood had recognized him.

It was Colonel Trafton!

The villain was coming directly upon him. There was no escaping the conflict that was sure to come.

"Halt!"

Captain Chetwood sprang upright and leveled his pistol at the head of the colonel.

He drew rein at once.

"Captain Chetwood!"

"Exactly," returned the Unionist. "You will oblige me, colonel, by dismounting at once. I want your horse."

"I am sorry, but can't oblige you," answered the colonel quickly.

Captain Chetwood saw the man's hand fall to his holster.

"Stop, or I will fire!"

But the warning was unheeded by the Southerner, who drew his pistol and opened fire on the Union captain.

Two leaden pellets went hurtling through the air, burying themselves in the ground behind Captain Chetwood ere he attempted to return the fire.

The captain remembered the request of "Loyal Mose," that he would spare the colonel for his vengeance, and on this occasion would have spared him had not he opened hostilities without ceremony, and forced the Yankee captain to retaliate.

The Union officer's right arm shot suddenly forward, a bit of fire leaped from the muzzle of his re-

volver, then came a sharp report, and Colonel Trafton reeled and pitched from his saddle.

With a snort of terror, the horse dashed madly from the spot.

"You would have it, colonel," uttered Chetwood. "The fortunes of war sent you to me and to your death. "Loyal Mose" ought not to complain."

A loud yell in the distance called the Unionist's attention to the fact that several Confederate troopers were galloping toward him from the field below.

He had no wish to contend, single-handed, against a score of gray-coats; therefore, he bent and raised the fainting Andy Potter in his arms, and dashed rapidly from the spot.

As the Unionist ran along the hill-side a score of carbines were leveled upon him, and a volley of leaden pellets went hurtling after his retreating form.

Not one of them touched him, however, and in a little time the captain disappeared from the sight of his pursuers over a ridge.

The pursuit was abandoned at the side of their fallen colonel.

Captain Chetwood broke through a clump of bushes to run upon a regiment of Unionists drawn up in battle array.

His coming was received with wild shouts.

Quite exhausted from his recent exertions, the captain deposited his burden on the grass, and the regimental doctor was called, who soon succeeded in bringing Andy Potter out of his swoon.

"A blamed little fool!"

This was Potter's comment on himself when told of his fainting fit by Captain Chetwood.

"Ah, my boy, there are few men who would not have fainted in your position."

"And how'd I git here out of the battle?"

"I carried you."

"I'd been deader'n a door nail before this time if it hadn't a been for you, Colonel——"

"Not colonel, but captain, Andy," said the captain, interrupting the young Ohioan.

"Well, you deserve to be a general," asserted Potter. "So I up an' fainted jes like a gal. What a fool —what a fool! Dad would think I wasn't good for nothin', here's well as to home, if he'd heard I fainted when I wasn't hurt;" and the countenance of the young soldier assumed a lugubrious aspect.

"But my dear boy, you were hurt, and badly. I thought at one time you would never look upon the sun again."

Andy felt of his head, which was very sore, and ached badly.

"Yes, that's a fact; I did git a clip on the head; but I can't see how 't should effect me. Dad always said I hadn't the brains of a wasp. Can anybody feel t'hout brains, col—captain, I mean?"

The look on the questioner's face was so comically serious that Captain Chetwood could not repress a laugh.

"Well, you may laugh if you like," cried the awkward youth; "but if I've got brains, it's the fust time I ever was aware on't from feelin'."

"Every one has brains, more or less, Andy."

"Well, it must be I've got less. Ought to b'en a gal. An't fit to fight if I tumble over in a swoon at smell o' gunpowder."

Then Andy attempted to rise, but sank back from sheer weakness.

"Weak's a cat," he groaned. "Confound it! won't I ever 'mount to anything?"

"Hush, my boy!" cried Captain Chetwood at this point. "You are a brave fellow, and a worthy defender of the Union and the flag. Andy Potter, I am proud to know you!"

And the speaker's voice was husky with emotion as he finished.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE "LOYAL TIGERS."

As we have said, Wright formed a new line of battle, and partially succeeded in checking the frightful rush of fugitives.

The force of the onset now seemed very much spent, for the Confederates began to advance with more caution, and bring forward their artillery.

Besides, the rich plunder of two camps was too tempting a prize for the half-starved troops of Early, and they left their ranks in crowds, and began to pillage.

Had Wright known this, it is possible that he might have made a successful stand where he was, but the enemy having possession of the turnpike that led toward Winchester, he feared that his communications would be severed, and therefore fell back toward Middletown.

But this was somewhat later than the hour of Captain Chetwood's joining the command with his friend, Andy Potter.

Although the Confederates were intent on securing the good things left in the Federal camp, they were still mindful of the fact that a portion of the Union Army still remained almost intact, and to render their victory complete, it would be necessary to break the lines of Wright and send him flying down the valley after the broken legions of Crook and Emory.

Huge masses of the enemy soon moved upon the last position held by the Federals.

"Make ready, boys, the rebs are coming!"

This cry broke the hush that had rested over the

hill for a time, where the Sixth Corps lay waiting for the onset of the foe.

There was nothing to encourage them to resistance now, since the larger part of the army was flying in broken fragments down the valley.

Andy Potter staggered to his feet; but he was too dizzy to stand.

Tears actually came to his eyes when he realized his condition.

"Weak as a cat," he groaned. "Leave me, captain, and give the hydra-heads goss. No use wastin' time over a body like me. I an't good for nothin' nohow."

"You'll be all right soon," cried Captain Chetwood, cheerily. "I will get you to the rear——"

"No—no; go, cap'n. I'll hate ye if ye don't. The Johnnies is comin'; I hear 'em yell. If I only had a gun, I might help a little, anyhow. Lost old breech-loader, didn't I?"

"Yes; but you couldn't use a gun now if you had one," said the captain.

A long, loud, heaven-piercing yell was borne to their ears from the left. Then came the terrific crash of musketry, accompanied by the rumble and roar of the larger guns.

The enemy was opening with artillery.

A terrific charge was being made by the victorious brigades of Longstreet and Early.

"Oh, gracious! what shall I do?" groaned poor Andy. "I han't worth a cent——"

But Captain Chetwood was anxious to have a hand in the fight, and he did not wait for the Ohio boy to finish his sentence.

Seizing him in his arms as though he were but a child, he dashed away toward the rear, while the blue-coats advanced along the hill to repel the charge.

Too weak to resist, Andy Potter could only groan and submit.

Under a rock, beyond the crash of battle, Captain Chetwood placed his young friend.

The crash of battle was ringing in his ears, and he was anxious to enter the conflict, and strike a blow for the Union, where, against odds, Wright's veterans were struggling desperately.

"When the fight is over I will return. Don't leave this spot. Good-by, Andy, and may God protect the right."

Then Captain Chetwood turned and rushed away to the left, and toward the seething vortex of bloody conflict.

Before the young Unionist had gone far, his steps were held by the loud clatter of hoofs and clang of accoutrements.

A magnificent body of Union cavalry was dashing forward to enter the fight on the left, where the shot and shell of the enemy were doing their terrible work.

The solitary man in blue, armed with sword and revolver, attracted the attention of the commander of the Union cavalry, and when within a few rods, the command to halt rang along the line.

Captain Chetwood uttered a glad cry, and sprang forward, soon gaining the side of the captain who led the magnificent company, now numbering six-score horsemen.

The small, pale-faced man, with sombre hair and eyes, who sat upon his steed like a centaur, was not unknown to the Union captain.

" 'Loyal Mose!' " was the captain's glad cry, as he reached the side of the cavalry commander, and grasped the thin white hand extended to meet his.

For a moment neither spoke.

There was an outflow of gladness that was too full for words.

Captain Chetwood was the first to break the silence.

The crash of the conflict warned him that it was

high time he was at the front, and he was anxiuos to go.

"You escaped after all?" said the captain. "I confess that I was deeply troubled on your account, Moses."

"So deeply that you failed to come around and inquire," retorted "Loyal Mose," with a low laugh.

"I declare——"

"Not a word, my dear Royal. I know all you would say. Duty held you in other parts. Of course I knew this, and besides, if I had been killed that day of course your returning would have been worse than useless; but I escaped. How, do you think?"

"I cannot even guess."

"Bertha——"

"What, did she——"

"She saved my life a second time. She's a brave girl, Royal, one worthy to become a general's wife. I swear, I came near falling over ears in love with her myself."

"Why didn't you?"

"Two considerations prevented."

"Ah!"

"She was in love, but not with me, and I—well, I left a girl in Maryland, Rose Anderson; perhaps you have heard me speak of her? No? Well, it's a fact; but this will never do; I must to the front, and give the traitors a taste of cold steel. I hope to meet Colonel Trafton——"

"You will not meet him, Moses."

"Why not? Such a thing is not impossible."

"Quite impossible," answered the captain. "Colonel Trafton is dead."

"Dead! Are you sure?"

"I am; I killed him myself."

"Loyal Mose" seemed amazed at the news.

"Captain Chetwood, I thought you promised to

leave this miscreant to the vengeance of a wronged son and brother? Have you so soon forgotten?"

"No. It was his life or mine, Moses Bluff."

"In that case you are excusable, but I did hope to have the pleasure of shooting the scoundrel; but if he is dead, my revenge must go."

The young cavalry leader straightened in his saddle, glanced to the left, where the smoke of battle rested, and from whence came fugitives in blue, rushing northward to swell the flood that was glutting the highway, overflowing into the fields and woods in a continuous stream.

"Forward, boys!"

"Loyal Mose" drew and waved his sword aloft.

Captain Chetwood saw sparks of fire flash from under the heels of the "Loyal Tigers" as they dashed into the fray.

Down across the highway the column of blue dashed, a loud cheer echoing and re-echoing along the hill, as the gallant troop dashed into the smoke and flame.

Soon the brave company was lost to view in the smoke of battle, and Captain Chetwood hurried forward to join the struggling lines of infantry.

The Confederates surged forward with furious yells, firing as they advanced.

The din of the conflict was at its height when Captain Chetwood entered the smoke that hung over the contending armies, and hurriedly advanced into the throng of blue-coats, who were manfully breasting the tide of gray that had thus far this day swept irresistibly onward.

To the front, where the bullets fell like hail, Captain Chetwood made his way.

It mattered not to him that he was not with his own regiment. That had broken and gone to pieces on the first assault, and its helpless fragments were now drifting down the valley in wild disorder, while

one of its officers was at the front determined on doing his duty at whatever cost.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A SAD SCENE.

It was a wild and terrible scene that fell on the eye of Captain Chetwood as he pushed his way to the battle front.

Forward with the rush of an avalanche the gray brigades came, yelling like demons let loose from the lower regions.

Frightful was the uproar, awful the slaughter, as bullets and bayonets did their work, and piled the reeking sod with dead and dying.

"Hold the ground, boys; the salvation of the army depends upon you!" shouted the captain, as he passed along the front.

The crash of guns, and shrieks of the dying, welle up from the struggling hosts.

> " A thousand glorious actions that might claim
> Triumphant laurels, and immortal fame,
> Confus'd in clouds of glorious actions lie,
> And troops of heroes undistinguished die."

The heavy guns, some of them but lately captured, belched forth iron hail and hissing shell upon the Federal lines, and it was a wonder indeed that Wright was able to hold his own, and hurl back the furious charge that swept with wild fury upon him.

He did hold his own.

The furious charge was turned back in repulse.

A cheer, rather of thanksgiving than of victory, welled up from the battered lines of blue, as the gray ranks receded before their fire, and rolled back some distance from the scene of the awful struggle.

Now came a breathing spell for the Sixth Corps, enabling them to form their lines with a view to covering the flight of the immense crowd of fugitives that darkened all the fields and the highway in the rear.

Nevertheless, this was but a pause in the conflict.

Early had won a great victory, and broken the splendid army into fragments that Sheridan had led up the valley to victory from Opequon to Fisher's Hill and beyond.

How changed the scene!

The victorious banners of the Union are, in one short hour, hurled back, and the great army of Sheridan cut in twain, scattered into fragments, almost utterly dispersed—no, not utterly, for the gallant Sixth Corps still holds its organization intact, and falls slowly and sullenly back, covering the disgraceful route as best it can.

Amid the roar of artillery, incessant volleys of musketry, and shouts and yells of the pursuers, were heard the cries and screams of teamsters, as they endeavored to get off with the heavy train.

It was a scene of the wildest confusion.

Shells fell and exploded amid horses and wagons, tearing the animals to pieces, rending wagons, and slaughtering the drivers mercilessly.

There was no help for it. The Federals were retreating, and soon the ground now occupied by the Union heroes would be swarming with gray-coats.

Instead of assaulting with the bayonet, Early posted his artillery in such a position as to pour a merciless storm of shot and shell into the Union ranks, and beyond, into the demoralized mass that was rushing down the valley in a manner that was plainly devoid of hope.

The day was lost.

To escape from the fearful fire of those guns and

bring together once more the shattered remains of the Union Army, was now all that could be done.

It was, indeed, a time of deep humiliation on the part of Sheridan's troops.

The glory of the past month was being literally torn from the hands of the Federal Army, and deep disgrace was apparently to settle over the Union cause in the valley of the Shenadoah.

Captain Chetwood, who had passed through the storm of shot and shell thus far uninjured, bethought him of his young acquaintance of the morning, the awkward Ohio boy, Andy Potter.

He was as weak as a cat, as he himself expressed it when the captain left him.

Soon the gray battalions would sweep over the spot where the captain had left the young man, and he might either fall into the hands of the enemy, or die by a bullet.

To avert such a catastrophe, Captain Chetwood resolved to get the youth from the field to a place of safety.

When the Union lines began to recede, Captain Chetwood hastened to the rear, and pushing his way through a mass of fugitives, soon gained the vicinity of the spot where he had parted from Andy Potter but a very brief time before.

Soon the rock behind which he had placed Andy, came under his eye.

Quickly Captain Chetwood sprang forward, and stood beside the rock. Andy Potter was not there.

"I told him not to stir from this spot," muttered Royal, "but it seems he did not obey me. If he has fallen into the enemy's hands, it is his own fault. I have done what I could for the young fellow."

The shriek of shells filled the air, and these terrible projectiles were exploding not far away.

Near where Captain Chetwood stood lay the forms

of three Union soldiers, mangled and dead, literally torn to fragments by shells.

Andy Potter was nowhere to be seen.

Off to the left a pandemonium seemed in full blast.

Teamsters, soldiers, horses, wagons, and caissons rushed pell-mell in one confused mass.

Dead horses, broken wagons, and provisions were scattered about promiscuously. Guns, knapsacks and coats lay everywhere, flung aside by the Unionists in their mad flight.

It was a second Bull Run, and no mistake.

Longstreet and Early had seemingly planned well, and given *coup de grace* to the Army of the Shenandoah.

Thus it appeared to Royal Chetwood, as he stood regarding the wild scene before him, with the growl of the artillery, the crack and crash of the musketry, and shrieks of exploding shells making hideous music in his ears.

"I suppose I may as well follow the crowd," soliloquized the Union captain. "It would be idle to search for Andy now. If not dead, he has probably escaped."

"Weak's a cat, boss. Will ye give me a ride?"

Quite startled, Captain Royal Chetwood at the sound of a voice not far away—a voice that could come from but one human being in the world.

"By Heaven! there's Andy Potter now, or I'm a fool!"

Andy Potter it proved to be, sure enough, begging a ride of a teamster, who was just springing to saddle the wagon, which had been lightened of the most of its load, that the mules attached might move with greater speed.

"No time to wait!" shouted the teamster.

The youth from Ohio, though "weak as a cat," caught the edge of the box, and, as the wagon dashed

on, drew himself over the side, and rolled upon the floor in the dirt.

Captain Chetwood, who was to the left, and a little in advance of the moving team, bounded suddenly forward, down on the incline, and succeeded in intercepting the wagon.

In the twinkling of an eye the captain grasped the edge of the box and drew himself over, gaining his feet behind the driver.

"Too many. Git out—git out, I tell yer!" and the Jehu turned and laid his whip over the cowering form of poor Andy, who, with the breath nearly jolted from his body, was rolling about on the bottom of the high box.

"Stop that, you infernal coward!"

The wrath of Captain Chetwood was at once aroused.

"Touch that boy again, and I'll kill you!"

To give complete emphasis to his words, Royal Chetwood thrust the muzzle of his revolver in the face of the driver, who cowered instantly, and began begging for mercy.

"Drive on, then, to Middletown, and hold your peace."

Away, over the rough ground, went the wagon, jolting and bounding, while Captain Chetwood turned to Andy Potter, and asked him how he felt.

"Weak's a cat, boss," groaned the young Ohioan. "I an't good for nothin'—not a thing. Dad always said so, too. Here I am, runnin' like a greaser, when I ought to be fightin' like a man for the flag."

"You'd do better than the rest of us, then, my boy," said the captain. "The whole Union Army is on the run."

"It is a plaguey shame, captain."

"It is, indeed. If Sheridan had been here, this disgraceful rout would not have happened, in my

opinion," uttered Captain Royal Chetwood, and he fully believed the words he uttered.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

IN THE ENEMY'S HANDS.

Early was still assailing the left flank of the Union Army with great fury.

Merritt and Custer, with two divisions of cavalry, were sent over to check the foe. There was a wide expanse of wooded field near Middletown where our troops rushed to the fray.

Strengthened by the captured artillery, the Confederates brought their overwhelming batteries to bear on our exhausted columns, shaking them into fragments.

Captain Chetwood remained with Andy Potter until assured that he was beyond danger, and with a hearty handshake and good-by, the gallant captain left him and once more turned his face to the front.

Royal Chetwood felt the disgrace of the rout keenly, as much so as did any officer in the army, and was ready to do anything, even to entering the ranks and bearing a musket in the fray, if by so doing the victorious foe could be checked.

The Union Army was falling back beyond Middletown, while the cavalry was doing its utmost to cover the retreat, and check the furious onset of Early's legions.

Captain Chetwood was not long in discovering a riderless horse; these were numerous enough on that fateful day, and mounting, the gallant captain dashed over the swelling ground to the front.

A thrill of conscious power shot through the heart of Royal Chetwood as he found himself well mounted

on a mettlesome and powerful steed, who sniffled the battle from afar, and seemed anxious to enter the fray.

But he could be no more anxious than was his new master.

Captain Chetwood soon gained the summit of a hill, from which he could look down upon the Middletown meadows.

What a sight met his gazae!

Below, in the wooded field, the crash of battle was at its height—a confused mass of dashing horsemen, marching infantry, gleaming bayonets, and flash of musketry and carbines.

The din was awful.

The earth trembled under the heavy discharges of artillery; while the shouts of the combatants were heard above the roar and crash of arms.

For a moment Captain Chetwood paused, ere rushing headlong into this woeful confusion.

Merritt's and Custer's brave boys were struggling there, holding in check the flower of Southern chivalry, while Sheridan's routed veterans were falling rapidly back to assume a new lease.

It was a grand sight, thrilling to the last degree.

Tightening his rein, the Union captain spoke to his horse, who, with a fierce neigh, dashed down toward the scene of conflict.

Soon horse and rider were lost to view in the smoke of battle.

Forward among the gallant heroes of Merritt's division Captain Chetwood passed, and soon found himself in the midst of the fray.

In one part of the field the cavalrymen were dismounted, and fought from behind trees, Indian fashion.

Union lead cut through bones and muscle, and many a gray-coat was sent to his long last account.

"Give it to 'em Hail Columby!" shouted a stout

blue-coat, not twenty feet from where Captain Chetwood was firing his revolver into the foe.

"Hold the Johnnies back. Give it to 'em—give it to 'em!"

Leaden pellets struck the trees, and pattered like rain-drops through the wood.

Men were falling on every side.

Ever and anon the wild, fierce screech was heard reverberating along the skies.

"Hold them back, boys!—hold them back!"

An officer's voice rang over the field.

The fight was waxing hotter each moment.

The Unionists had no thought of winning the victory; only to hold the enemy in check for a brief time, until the army could form outside the confusion of battle and prepare to meet the foe in battle array.

Captain Chetwood's horse seemed to enjoy the excitement, and became imbued with the spirit of the contest, dashing forward into the thickest of the fray.

This might be a commendable thing in the brute, but when the animal insisted on carrying the Yankee captain beyond the front, into the enemy's lines, Captain Chetwood did not appreciate the steed's bravery.

In vain he jerked the rein.

For a time the animal seemed crazy, and became utterly unmanageable.

"Look out thar! Don't go thar!" was the warning cry of a soldier.

Chetwood was not anxious to "go thar," but his horse dashed forward in spite of all his efforts to prevent.

The horse had been hit by a bullet, and was crazed so that neither hand nor voice of the rider had any power to stay the animal's movements.

Beyond the Union line, directly into the muzzles of guns, the horse dashed, before the astounded captain had time to throw himself from the saddle.

"Hait, Yank!"

A dozen bayonets gleamed in the face of Captain Chetwood, but he did not halt.

He could not.

With furious bounds, the crazed steed dashed on, breaking through the line, going on and on like the wind of a cyclone.

Several shots were fired after the onrushing horse and rider.

Many of these took effect.

The horse plunged to earth in the agonies of death, and before Captain Chetwood could extricate himself from the saddle, he was surrounded by a score of Confederate infantrymen.

"Wall, Yank, I guess you'll surrender now."

"I must needs bow to the inevitable," answered the Union captain, with a forced laugh.

"What the devil sent you over at such a rate of speed, young feller?"

"I am racing on a wager," answered the captain, with grim humor. "There were men who said I couldn't break through your lines and live. I have proved that those fellows lied."

"Fact, by thunder!"

The captain was well to the rear of the line, and out of the smoke of conflict. He had run the gantlet, and might have escaped if his horse had not failed him at the last minute.

For this failure the brute was not to blame, however, since nearly a dozen balls had found lodgment in his body.

There was not an officer among the gray-coats who had captured Captain Chetwood, and he was subjected to the most violent badgering.

"We'll take your sword and pistol, Yank," said a lank Louisianian. "You an't safe with them shootin'-irons."

Of course, the captain suffered himself to be disarmed without resistance.

"Now then, them boots."

"Sit down, Yank, we've got ter hev ther boots."

"But this is outrageous," protested Captain Chetwood.

"No back talk, young feller. We 'uns is runnin' this affair."

The captain sat upon the body of his horse and suffered his boots to be drawn from his feet.

"Pretty good suit o' clo's; guess we'll take 'em."

In spite of the captain's ill-concealed wrath, his uniform, even to his pantaloons, was stripped from his person.

The blue clothes were distributed among the gray-coats, and their cast-off garments flung at the captain.

If ever a man was indignant that man was Captain Chetwood at that moment.

"Dress up, cap, ef yer don't want ter go naked."

"You insolent dog! Your commander shall hear of this!" cried the Union captain, exploding with rage.

This outburst was met with a sneering laugh.

The captain found that threats of reporting the men only provoked laughter, so that he finally concluded to make the best of a bad bargain, and donned the cast-off garments.

Thus rigged out, he presented the appearance of a good-looking Confederate soldier.

After a little thought, the prisoner concluded that the exchange had not been a bad one after all, as in his present guise, he might be able to make his escape, whereas, in Union blue, he would stand little show.

While he was debating the situation and looking down at his bare feet—for the soldiers had taken his stockings as well as boots—a single horeman dashed from a clump of trees near, and rode up to the group

of Confederates. His head was bandaged, and he seemed to be an officer of rank.

"I will appeal to this officer," thought the captain, but on a nearer approach, Chetwood concluded that an appeal to the new-comer would be wasted.

He had recognized the man.

It was Colonel Ezra Trafton!

CHAPTER XXIX.

CHARGE AND COUNTERCHARGE.

The sight of the colonel was surprising, to say the least. That is, Captain Chetwood was surprised to meet a man whom he believed he had shot dead but a short time before, and consequently he gave vent to that surprise in a long stare, accompanied by a whistle.

"Ha! this is my old friend, Captain Chetwood," ejaculated the guerrilla colonel, the moment his eyes rested on the face of the Union captain. "I am more than pleased to meet you, captain, I am delighted; and you have joined the Confederates, too; well, this is good."

There was a sneer on the colonel's lip, a flash of devilish enmity in his black eyes, as they were bent in a piercing gaze on the prisoner.

Of course the colonel knew how Chetwood came to be in his present garb. One glance around among the Confederate soldiers there assembled would tell the story.

"You seem to be a prisoner, captain."

"I seem to be," admitted Chetwood.

"Exactly. I think I will take you under my protection. We are such great friends, and I am so desirous of knowing that you are well. You thought I was numbered with the clods of the valley, captain?"

"I hoped so."

"I knew it. You tried to murder me, but the bullet an't molded that is to find the life of Colonel Trafton—ha, ha, ha!"

"Be not too sure, Colonel Trafton," returned the captain. "The battle is not yet over. You may die before the setting of to-day's sun."

"Bother your nonsense!" snapped the colonel. "I don't believe you will ever see another sun. You will not if I know myself."

While the colonel was talking, a dozen mounted gray-coats came dashing up to the spot.

They were members of Trafton's command.

"Boys, we've got more work to do," cried Trafton. "I learn that "Traitor Mose" and his troop have entered the fight, and we must meet them. I wish to wipe that villain and his gang of outlaws from the face of the earth."

"Ay, ay!" was the reply.

"First, however, comes another matter," pursued the colonel. "We have here a Yankee spy. I wish you to conduct him to a secluded spot in the rear, say the big rock near Paulding's farm. After the fight I will meet you there, and settle this fellow's case."

"All right, colonel."

Then Trafton detailed six men to take Captain Chetwood to the rear, while he proceeded to rejoin his command, in company with the remainder of the squad.

"Good-by, captain; I will see you later;" and the colonel lifted his hat and bowed mockingly toward the Union officer, exposing the blood-stained bandage more fully as he did so, which gave Chetwood the knowledge that his bullet had come near terminating the life of the villain.

"Loyal Mose" supposed the colonel dead, and would not be on his guard.

"Go to the front, colonel," muttered Chetwood;

"when you return, if you should return, you will not find me waiting for you to hang—not if I know myself, and I think that I do."

Captain Chetwood was lifted to the saddle, in front of one of the six cavalrymen, and borne away to the rear, beyond the crash and roar of the conflict near Middletown.

The fight on Middletown Meadows was a furious one, and one of the first to enter the fray was "Loyal Mose," at the head of his gallant troop.

The fight was well-nigh over when Colonel Trafton, at the head of two hundred men, dashed along the fields in search of his enemy, the loyal boy of Virginia.

The colonel had no wish to participate in the struggle, further than to swoop down upon and crush Moses Bluff.

No; the brave colonel was more at home raiding wagon trains, or chasing Union families from home and burning their houses. In this latter work he had become a terror to females and little children, whose male defenders were in the Union ranks fighting for the old flag.

"Hurrah! the Yankees are on the run again!"

This shout was taken up and repeated a score of times, as the veterans of Merritt and Custer began to retire.

Long, loud, and shrill rang the Confederate yell above the din of strife.

"Going back—running like cowards, and I have not yet met the man I hate," cried Colonel Trafton, swinging his sword aloft, making the air about him blue with oaths.

"Look you, kunnel," cried out a man who rode at the Confederate raider's side. "Thar's pickin's for ye."

The smoke of battle had lifted, and through the trees, a squad of Union cavalry was moving.

The whole squad did not number two score, and at their head rode a youth of effeminate cast of countenance, with sallow face and waving masses of black hair.

Colonel Trafton gave a slight start as he caught sight of the slim figure that rode at the head of the Union troop.

Merritt and Custer were falling back, and this squad of Unionists was evidently reconnoitering a bit on the flank, before following the rest of the army in retirement from the bloody field.

Colonel Trafton needed but one glance at the leader of the Union troop to satisfy himself of the truth.

"Loyal Mose" was before him, and with but a handful of men.

Now was the time to sweep his foe from his path forever.

Every man in Colonel Trafton's command beheld the Unionists at the same time, and a shout ran along the line as Colonel Trafton pointed with his sword toward the moving troop.

"Yonder are the Virginia traitors! Forward, lads, and give them no quarter!"

With a yell that would have done credit to a band of Indians, the cavalrymen dashed forward, and soon the crack of carbines rang loudly through the woods.

Almost insane with joy at the prospect of crushing his most deadly foe, Colonel Trafton galloped forward at the head of his troop, yelling like mad.

Yells are not always deadly weapons, however.

In this case they did not prove so.

The squad of Unionists had discovered the enemy almost, if not quite as soon, as they had been discovered by the foe.

Two-score of carbines were suddenly leveled, and when the two hundred raiders dashed forward, a long sheet of red flashed in their front, and two-score of guns awoke the echoes of the wood.

It was a deadly volley.

Fully a score of saddles were emptied, and the man who had ridden beside Colonel Trafton fell, pierced to the heart.

As he went down his head struck the pommel of Trafton's saddle, and the warm life-blood of the dying raider plashed in the face of his commander.

At the same instant a leaden pellet grazed the colonel's cheek, sufficiently close to start the blood.

The wild yell died on the lips of the gallant colonel.

This was something not down in the bills.

With a masterly effort, he reined in his horse, and gazed after his rushing troops in dismay.

Crack, crack, crack!

The woods seemed alive with Yankee marksmen.

On all sides his own troops tumbled, and soon the onward sweep of gray-coats was checked.

Back in wild confusion they came.

No voice of command bidding them face the other way. Ah, no, for Colonel Trafton had drawn out of the dangerous whirlpool in time to save his own precious neck.

He remembered the words of Captain Chetwood, and was not yet ready to lay down his life for the cause.

Pell-mell, in wildest confusion, they rushed back over the ground they had lately crossed.

The Unionists had been reinforced by some of Custer's men, which accounted for the furious offensiveness assumed by them.

The Federals did not pursue very far, however.

The main army was falling back from Middletown, and prudence forbade such a course.

Colonel Trafton was glad to retire from the field, leaving "Loyal Mose" and his Tigers masters of the situation.

They in turn were obliged to retire and follow the retreating columns of the Union.

CHAPTER XXX.

SHERIDAN'S RIDE.

Sheridan, on his way back to the army, had slept at Winchester, twenty miles distant, the night before.

In the morning, little dreaming of the terror reigning in his camp in front, he sat down to his breakfast, and after it was finished, he mounted his horse, and with his escort rode leisurely forward.

His noble army had been struggling on the brink of destruction for four long hours.

The gallant leader knew nothing of the change that had taken place so unexpectedly in the situation of affairs.

When he left the valley for Washington, Early's army was almost a thing of the past, and Sheridan had not the slightest expectation of an attack so soon after posting his men along Cedar Creek.

The unexpected is often the most likely to occur, as it did in this case.

The Unionists, shattered and hard pressed, made only a short stand at Middletown, and the army passed on in full retreat toward Newtown, five miles in the rear.

On the heights around the former place, Early planted his batteries, which poured in a terrible fire on the uncovered army as it slowly fell back along the highway and across the fields.

As Sheridan rode leisurely forward, the rumble and jar of the heavy guns on Middletown heights caused him to look up in surprise.

Still he felt no uneasiness, for he was confident that

if Early had attacked his strong position at Cedar Creek, he would be terribly beaten.

On rode Sheridan with the calmness of one riding out for a pleasure trip.

As the thunder of distant guns grew louder and more continuous, and was evidently rolling back toward him, his practiced ear told him too well that a heavy battle was raging in front, and that his army was retreating.

Startled from his composure, as the terrible truth flashed upon his brain, he dashed the spurs into his horse, and was soon far ahead of his escort, tearing madly along the road.

Louder, deadlier than before, came the boom of distant cannon.

The earth seemed to vibrate under him as Sheridan swept furiously onward.

A deep presentiment of evil possessed the brave chief as he tore furiously down the road toward the sound of conflict.

Soon a sight met his strained vision that confirmed his wildest fears—men in Union blue rushing in the headlong flight down the road. Camp-followers and fugitives without number.

"Men, what does this mean?" Sheridan demanded, sternly, his eye flashing fire.

"The army's bu'sted, gen'ral. The rebs are comin' full-tilt!" cried a fleeing private, who was well-nigh winded by his anxious endeavors to escape from the devastation at the front.

For a moment the great commander sat on his horse like one bereft of sense. The truth seemed too near impossible for belief.

What! his noble army, that only a few weeks before he had led twice to victory, broken, shattered, gone?

In a moment the lion in his nature was roused, and

instead of being overwhelmed at the disaster, as most generals would have been, he rose above it.

"It shall not be so!" he mentally exclaimed.

Once more he planted the rowels into his steed, and dashed on down the road toward the scene of conflict.

As he advanced, the cloud of fugitives augmented.

Men were running down the valley hatless, without guns or knapsacks, having thrown aside all incumbrance, that they might escape the deadly bullets of the foe.

It was disgraceful.

Sheridan felt it was so, keenly.

As he sped on, the cloud of stragglers deepened, and the general believed it time to exert his influence.

Snatching his hat in hand, Sheridan swung it over his head and shouted:

"Face the other way, boys! face the other way! We are going back to our camps! We are going to lick them out of their boots!"

It was the cry of a man determined to retrieve the disasters of the day, if such a thing were possible.

There was a vast amount of magnetism about Phil Sheridan that carried men with him in spite of themselves.

The frightened stragglers paused and shouted as they beheld their gallant chieftain flying past.

That was a notable ride, and the name of Sheridan —our Sheridan—will live long in song and story, as well as on the page of history.

Sheridan's ride from Winchester to meet and turn back his fleeing, dismayed army, is one of the grandest things in all history, and we would fain linger over the scene, but time and space forbid.

Many of the wounded who had escaped from the heat of the battle, and fallen to die by the road-side, lifted their heads, while their eyes caught sight of

their returning comrades, and sent cheers after his flying form.

"God save the general!"

"Little Phil has come!"

"The Johnnies'll catch it now!"

Such and like expressions followed the dashing leader as he whirled on his way up the valley.

On at break-neck speed, past fields and woods, and bush-clad hills, dashed the intrepid commander—on and on, shouting for the fleeing troops to face about and stand by their guns once more.

The enthusiasm gathered volume as the little man in shoulder-straps swept on.

That one man's confident assurance was contagious.

The soldiers caught the fever, and the retreat was halted.

Men who had not flung aside their muskets paused in their wild, unreasoning flight, to look after the little man on horseback, and lean on their guns.

"Sheridan has come! Sheridan has come!"

Like magic, the cry ran from lip to lip, and new courage seemed suddenly to be infused into the reckless, frightened rabble.

"By hokey, boys, let's go back!"

A tall soldier uttered the words as he stood staring after the swift-flying heels of the gallant steed that bore Sheridan on that twenty-mile ride up the Shenandoah Valley that October day.

Many a firm "we will" answered the first speaker.

On swept Sheridan through the deepening crowd of fugitives.

His cry of "Face the other way, boys!" acted like magic, and soon the stragglers halted; and many were not only facing the other way, but going back in the wake of the great commander.

Back once more to face the insolent victorious foe.

With face blazing with excitement, and his horse covered with foam, Sheridan suddenly appeared in

front of the astonished army, and at once ordered the retreat to stop.

The enemy had paused in his pursuit, so that our army was, at this time, out of the range of his guns, which enabled Sheridan to take measures to arrest the fugitives and bring them back, and in a short time he had a new line of battle formed.

Then the task of infusing the beaten army with new life and courage devolved upon the brave young commander.

Up and down the lines rode this modern Murat, giving words of cheer to men and officers alike.

His presence reassured the men. They had confidence in him, and his coming was far more to those beaten, disheartened battalions than an army with banners.

"Boys," cried Sheridan, "if I had been here this never would have happened; I tell you this never should have happened; and now we are going back to our camps. We are going to get a twist on them. We're going to lick them out of their boots."

Not very elegant language, perhaps, but it was plain, and to the point, and given with an emphasis not to be misunderstood. The boys in blue could understand the meaning of such language.

In answer, they gave vent to shouts and cheers that rent the very heavens.

Although the brave soldiers had eaten nothing since the night before, and been fighting for five hours, they felt a new strength infused into them by the confident bearing and language of their heroic commander.

For two hours Sheridan continued the task of riding up and down the lines, injecting cheerful words into the ears of his soldiers.

The gloom of the morning was fast passing away, and new life seemed infused in every arm, new hope

gleaming from every eye, as Sheridan's homely speech went home to their hearts.

CHAPTER XXXI.

SHERIDAN EXCITED.

The Loyal Tigers had participated in some of the fiercest fighting of the day, and many of the brave Virginia rangers had gone to their long, last account.

When Sheridan appeared upon the scene, "Loyal Mose" uttered a glad cry, for he believed the gallant general who had won so many brilliant victories, would persuade the Unionists to make a bold stand and hold their ground hereafter, at least.

"Boys, do you hear that cheering?"

"Bet yer boots, cap'n!"

"We'd be deaf ef we couldn't," chimed in a second ranger.

The Loyal Tigers were halted under some trees, and the stentorian cheers that rolled up in thunderous volume from the rear, across the fields, and went reverberating along the heavens, meant something.

"Boys, those cheers mean something!" cried "Loyal Mose."

"You bet!" put in another Tiger. "Them fellers yell as though they felt mighty good, though I can't see what it's fur. Ef gittin' licked like the duse is somethin' to feel glad over, then I kin see whar the yellin' comes in."

"It's not that!" cried "Loyal Mose," who had an inkling of the truth.

Soon his suspicions were confirmed.

Down a lane, between two long lines of blue, a horseman swept, hat off, his hair blowing loosely in the wind.

The eyes of all the Loyal Tigers were turned upon the coming horseman.

"Teetotal thunder! who's that comin', as though the devil had histed him?"

Thus cried out one of Bluff's troopers, as he craned his long neck and peered sharply at the coming horseman.

Louder, deeper, more shrill grew the cheers.

Hats and caps were waved, guns brandished, and general enthusiasm prevailed.

"Holy angels! it's Sheridan!" cried one of the rangers, with an emphasis that was felt.

"Sheridan, by the powers!"

"Hats off, lads! Let's give the general a rouser!" cried "Loyal Mose," as the Federal commander dashed down toward them.

"Hip, hip, hurrah!"

Such a stentorian shout went up from near five-score throats as to shake the tree-tops.

Sheridan noticed the troop of rangers, with their blue tunics and wide-rimmed hats—they attracted him—and he galloped down to their front and drew rein.

"Boys, we are not going to retreat any farther. This is a disgrace; it never should have happened. We are going back to camp—back to Cedar Creek!"

The rangers listened while the Union commander talked rapidly to them, emphasizing his remarks with sharp gesticulations.

"That's ther talk, gin'ral, we won't run. We'll foller yer to Hades ef ye say so."

"We'll go back!" cried Sheridan, "back to our camps. We will get a twist on the traitors that'll make them squirm. They are plundering our camps now, and won't expect much fight from you, but I tell you we'll win this battle yet—I tell you we will."

"You bet! That's ther talk!"

"My men have not been affected by the stampede,

not in the least," said "Loyal Mose," at this point. "We are ready to enter the fight at a moment's notice."

"The notice will soon come," answered the general. "I see that you know and will perform your duty. This has been a disgraceful rout; how it could have happened is more than I can imagine. If I had been here it would never have happened."

Then Sheridan wheeled his horse and rode away to encourage the men in other parts of the field.

"Them rebs is goin' to smell somethin' they don't expect," uttered one ranger, after the departure of the commander.

"Do you think so, Bob?"

"You bet! We're goin' back, an' don't ye forgit it, boys!"

The confident demeanor of Sheridan had inspired the most ignorant with courage, and the morale of the army had risen fifty per cent. within the last half-hour.

"Loyal Mose" felt elated at the prospect.

Now that Sheridan had come, a new order of things was to be inaugurated.

At length the Confederate Army was seen advancing across the fields, moving straight on the position held by the Nineteenth Corps.

Sheridan sent word to Emory to stop them at all hazards.

Once m re the smoke and crash of battle held the scene. At a word from "Loyal Mose," the rangers dashed down and entered the fight.

Bullets whistled on every side, but what cared these brave defenders of the flag for danger. It was for the Union and the flag the hardy mountain men fought, and under the leadership of such a man as Moses Bluff they were heedless of danger.

The contest was not long, but it was sharp and terrible.

" Down went many a gallant soldier,
Down went many a stout dragoon;
Lying grim and stark and gory
On the crimson field of glory,
Leaving us a noble story,
And their dark-cliffed home a boon."

"Hurrah!"

Up and down moved the gleaming sabres of the Virginia rangers.

The contest was almost over, and Early's gray regiments were worsted, going back with decimated ranks from the hotly contested field.

Then it was that a loud cheer welled up from throats not used to cheering in battle strife before that day.

It was the hearty Northern cheer that proclaimed them the victors, and no doubt astounded the lately victorious, confident foe.

"Charge, lads! Down with them!"

The voice of "Loyal Mose" rang sharp and clear above the battle din. Then, like an avalanche, the rangers swept down upon the foe, yelling like demons let loose.

Through the gray ranks the rangers crashed, riding down those who failed to get from under.

Striking right and left, the blue tunics made sad havoc in the gray.

It would be dangerous to follow too far, and soon the bugle sounded the recall.

The enemy had met with their first repulse of the day, and was doubtless considerably astonished.

Emory immediately sent an aid to Sheridan with the news that the enemy were repulsed.

"That's good—that's good!" laughed Sheridan. "Thank God for that! Now, then, tell General Emory if they attack him again to go after them, and follow them up, and sock it into them and to give them the devil!"

And, with almost every word, bringing his right hand down into the palm of his left with a sharp blow, he added:

"We'll get the tightest twist on them you ever saw; we'll have all those camps and cannon back again."

Whether aware of Sheridan's arrival, or astounded at the new and formidable line of battle that appeared before him, while a large part of his own army was rioting amid the camps, at all events Early at once abandoned the offensive and fell back, and began to throw up breastworks, evidently designing to hold the position till next day, which, by all ordinary rules, should be the earliest moment that our hungry, exhausted and discomfited army could be ready to make any movement.

But Sheridan had no intention of waiting until his army was thoroughly reorganized and recruited.

Right then and there he was deterimned to wipe out the stigma of this disgraceful defeat, and make the same dispatch that carried the news of the overthrow of his army also carry the thrilling news of its glorious victory.

While Early was falling back and throwing up breastworks, Sheridan was preparing for an onset all along the line.

It was a time fraught with the utmost moment to our army and to the American people.

Sheridan understood the situation well, and had resolved on risking everything in one grand, determined assault upon the victorious foe.

It must not go to the North—news of his army's utter defeat, with the victorious foe marching down the valley toward the Potomac. No; Sheridan was resolved upon a desperate effort to retrieve the fortunes of the day.

CHAPTER XXXII.

LOOKING INTO HIS OWN GRAVE.

We must not lose sight of Captain Royal Chetwood in dwelling upon army movements.

He has occupied a prominent place in our war drama, and will continue to do so to the close.

When he was taken to the rear in charge of six of Mosby's rough riders, the young captain felt anyway but happy.

His situation was not a pleasant one, the reader will admit.

He did not fear his guard, but well knowing the unscrupulous character of Colonel Trafton, he realized that only his death would satisfy the brevet-colonel from South Carolina.

"I must escape!"

This was what the Union captain decided upon, but it is often easier to plan than to execute. Resolving and doing are widely separated.

At least half a mile in the rear of the field where fighting was going on, the Confederate cavalrymen passed, then turned to the left and entered the woods that grew profusely along the edge of a field.

Beside a gurgling brook a moss-grown rock reared its head, and here the cavalry squad came to a halt to await the return of their leader.

They had not long to wait, not so long as they expected.

In less than twenty minutes after entering the woods, Captain Chetwood saw several horsemen approaching.

The captain had been lifted from the saddle, and

was closely watched by the six men, each holding a revolver in hand, ready for instant use.

Colonel Trafton had proclaimed him a spy, and such persons are usually considered desperate characters, which accounted for the severe watch kept on the captain by his captors.

Chetwood was not long in doubt as to the identity of the coming horsemen.

Colonel Trafton soon appeared, and springing from the saddle confronted his prisoner.

A dozen of his troopers had followed the colonel into the woods, while others were gathering in the cleared field beyond.

"Did you bring the scalp of 'Loyal Mose' with you?" questioned Captain Chetwood, a peculiar smile raising his blonde mustache as he faced the colonel.

"Fire away with your smart speeches," growled the Southerner. "You won't have many minutes to hiss your venom in the faces of gentlemen."

"Indeed! What has come over you now, colonel?"

"I'm not in a mood for bandying words," retorted his enemy, bluntly.

Then he called one of his men aside, an officer, apparently, and conversed with him for some minutes earnestly.

"I am sure it will be all right, colonel. Mosby will approve."

"It wouldn't be safe to give the fellow his freedom, and to attempt to hold him a prisoner for any length of time would be to give him a chance for escape. I shall proceed at once to do my duty."

"Quite right, colonel. As Davy Crockett said, 'Be sure you're right, then go ahead.' In this case, you are certainly right."

A part of this conversation came to the ears of Captain Chetwood, enough to assure him that he was the subject of conversation, and that the colonel was anx-

ious to commit a murder without coming under the ban of military law.

The colonel had no conscience to satisfy, and was only consulting his fears when he debated with a brother officer, regarding the manner of disposing of his prisoner.

Soon the colonel came back and faced Captain Chetwood once more.

"Well, what have you decided upon, colonel?" questioned the Union captain, coolly.

"To put you out of the world with the least dispatch possible."

"In other words, to murder me."

"Nothing of the kind," answered the villain, with a grim smile. "You are a spy——"

"You know better than that, Colonel Trafton," Chetwood interrupted, sharply.

"I know what I am about, all the same," retorted Trafton. "I don't propose to accept advice from you."

Then the colonel came nearer, and stood by the side of the prisoner.

"I have two enemies in the world, you and 'Traitor Mose.' I propose to remove them."

"Murder them!"

"As you will," he growled.

"But I am an officer in the service of the United States. You have no right to take my life, save in open battle. I am a prisoner, and should be treated as one—a prisoner of war."

The captain would fain argue the case, hoping to influence Trafton to spare his life. Why he wished to destroy him was not exactly plain to the mind of the loyal officer.

A brutal sneer curled the lip of Ezra Trafton.

He hated the captain with a bitterness that was beyond reason.

This was how he would do it. He could shoot or

hang the Unionist, then pretend sorrow for it afterward if any trouble should come.

The Union captain must die as a spy—he must die at all hazards.

"I don't mean to be hard with you, Captain Chetwood," said Colonel Trafton, in a soft voice. "You and I are comparative strangers. We met for the first time a few years ago; that acquaintance has not ripened into love, I assure you. Nevertheless, I like you better on continued acquaintance; but duty, stern and grim, bids me put aside my feelings in this case. It is my duty to see that you do no more spying for the Yankees. My men will dig your grave here, under one of these trees, and the murmuring breezes will sing a requiem over your tomb."

"You infernal villain!"

"There, that will do. You ought to thank me for being so kind, so thoughtful of your good," pursued the villain, with ironical devilishness. "If you fell in battle, your body might lay for days on the field, to be picked at by birds of prey, and at last your carcass find lodgment in a hole where hundreds of the *sans culottes* are thrown indiscriminately. Your fate is better. This huge rock shall be your headstone, and your name shall be delicately carved in its flinty surface. You will have a most enduring monument, captain. Upon the whole, I think you ought to thank me for my kindness."

The prisoner made no reply.

Colonel Trafton turned away, and issued orders to his men, who went at work with their sabres, scooping a hole in the ground not far away.

It was an ominous work, and Captain Chetwood could not repress a shudder.

He looked about him for an opportunity to escape from the doom worked out for him by the scheming and heartless colonel.

No such opportunity presented itself.

Four men stood within a few feet, with drawn revolvers, ready to shoot him down at a moment's warning, while the remainder of the squad not at work were formed in a circle near, with carbines in hand, as if anxious and aching for the murder to take place.

Soon the excavation seemed large enough, and of sufficient depth to suit the workers, and they paused and announced the first act in the wretched drama at an end.

"We will now ring up the curtain on the next scene," cried Colonel Trafton, meaningly.

He then waved his hand, and a man advanced with a handkerchief to blindfold the prisoner.

Captain Chetwood motioned him back.

"Let me die with my eyes open, at least!" he cried.

"Well, I'm not particular," grunted Colonel Trafton.

In spite of the prisoner's remonstrance, however, the Confederates bound his hands behind him, and then led him to a tree that stood on the verge of the shallow grave.

"Your time has come, Captain Chetwood," said Colonel Trafton, in a low tone. "We are in the rear of Early's army, your men are in rapid flight, and it is absolutely impossible for help to come from any quarter. I hope you are resigned."

"This is murder; that is all I have to say."

"I am sorry to see you so bitter," answered the colonel, as he left the side of the doomed man and took his place beside his second officer.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

NED BRIGHT'S WORK.

"One minute for prayer, my dear captain," cried the colonel, in a voice of sneering sarcasm.

"Are you ready, boys?"

This, on seeing that Captain Chetwood made no move nor uttered a word.

"Ready! Take aim!"

Six carbines fell to a level with the breast of Royal Chetwood.

He closed his eyes to await the fatal shot.

Clatter—clatter—clatter!

A single horseman came dashing down through the woods and gained the scene just as Colonel Trafton's "take aim" fell on the air.

"Hold! Up with your arms!"

Clear as a bell came the voice, not heavy for a man's. In fact, the rider of the steed was nothing but a boy, with fine, flashing eyes.

The command to fire was not given just then.

The new-comer's steed was flecked with foam, and the flush of excitement filled the boy's cheeks.

"Well, what is the matter now?" demanded Colonel Trafton, angrily.

"Is yonder man Captain Chetwood?"

"He is."

"I suspected as much. You then are Colonel Trafton, of Mosby's command?" pursued the boy, fixing his eyes in a steady, unflinching gaze on the face of the leader.

"Right again," growled Trafton. "Explain your business at once."

"I was instructed to place this in your hands."

It was a folded note, with "Colonel Trafton" hastily scrawled on the back.

Opening it, this is what the colonel, by brevet, read:

"COLONEL TRAFTON:—You will come with your command to my headquarters at once. This is imperative. If Captain Chetwood is still in your hands, turn him over with guard to bearer of this, who will see that he is taken care of. You will lose no time in complying with this order. JUBAL EARLY."

A frown darkened the face of Colonel Trafton when he read this strange missive.

But that it came from the general he could not doubt. Some grave need there was for his presence at headquarters.

He did not stop to question how the Confederate commander came to know that a Union captain by the name of Chetwood was in his possession. Perhaps some one who had witnessed the capture and had heard the captain's name had given the information.

The execution was at once staid.

It would be dangerous now to go forward with this order from his superior officer in his hands, and with deep regret the colonel prepared to obey the wishes of the commander-in-chief.

He detailed six men to accompany the prisoner and the young messenger.

"You have a respite for the present, Captain Chetwood, but it will be for but a short time. I will see you again later. In the meantime, I have instructed these men to shoot you down on the first sign of an attempt to escape."

"Thank you, colonel; I shall not attempt to escape."

Once more one of the Confederate horses was made to

carry double, and the six troopers moved through the woods toward the turnpike under the guidance of the boy.

Lieutenant-colonel Trafton mounted his steed, and was soon riding down beyond Middletown Meadows in search of Early's headquarters.

Captain Chetwood was puzzled, decidedly, at the course events were taking.

On the very brink of the grave, this lad had appeared, and snatched him from eternity. What did it mean? What did that slip of paper contain?

Captain Chetwood's hands were released from bonds, and he felt easier than before. When the little party gained the road, the soldier who acted as guard over Chetwood, rode beside the boy.

"Now, what in the world does this mean?" cried the Union captain, in no little astonishment, addressing the bright-faced youth who had been the means of saving his life.

"It means that you are to go to Richmond. If you have acted the spy you will be there condemned and executed," uttered the youth, rather vehemently, the captain thought.

"I am no spy," asserted the prisoner.

"That remains to be seen."

"Where will you take me now?"

"To a safe place, where there are other men of like ilk," returned the boy, spiritedly.

"Which is indefinite," thought the captain, although he did not utter this sentiment aloud.

The party had proceeded but a short distance when the boy led the way to the left, and plunged into the woods.

The cavalrymen followed unsuspiciously. They had been instructed to follow wherever Ned Bright should lead.

The youth had thus given his name, and, there-

fore, turned from the highway with the utmost confidence.

As it happened, these six raiders were unacquainted with this portion of the Shenandoah Valley, else they would certainly have suspected that young Bright was not traveling toward the rear.

Matters were badly mixed that day, and but few of the combatants could tell whereabouts in the wide world they were to bring up before the sun should set.

Ned Bright led the way through woods and across fields, for miles, seemingly, and, in truth, this was, much to the surprise of the prisoner, as well as to the wonder of the guard themselves.

"How much furder, bub?"

"Just a little. Colonel Woodford's regiment is guarding prisoners down here aways."

They were in the woods now, but suddenly came to an opening, and ran upon a line of soldiers drawn up as if in preparation for battle.

"Holy sailor! the Yankees!"

It was true; the little party had run unexpectedly upon a line of the newly formed army of the Union, and it was now too late to escape.

The six cavalrymen "caved" when a score of muskets were leveled upon them.

Captain Chetwood was once more a free man, and to Ned Bright he owed his life.

When the captain explained the situation, Bright was not detained, but the six raiders were pulled from their horses and sent to the rear.

Preparations were making for a battle. Sheridan had come, and a new order of things prevailed.

Captain Chetwood soon learned this much, and he felt that it would not be a hard matter to find his own company now.

Before seeking his place in the line of battle, he spoke with the boy, Ned Bright.

"You saved my life, my boy, and I cannot be too

grateful for the service. If there is anything I can do for you——"

"There is nothing," the boy interrupted, quickly.

"Will you answer a few questions?" urged the captain.

"If I can."

"What did that note contain that you placed in the hand of Colonel Trafton?"

"It was an order from General Early, commanding the colonel to appear before him at once, and turning Captain Chetwood over to the bearer of the note."

"It was not a genuine order?"

"A clever forgery, or swindle, rather," and the boy showed his milk-white teeth in a smile.

"This was all done for my benefit?"

"It was."

"Yet you are a stranger to me. It was risking much for one unknown to you."

"Granted."

The boy seemed unwilling to enlighten the captain further, but Chetwood was determined to solve the mystery, if possible.

"How should you know that I was a prisoner? How know my name and needs?" questioned the captain.

"Easy enough. One of your friends told me. It was at his suggestion that I forged the letter with Early's name attached. I confess that I had little faith in the plan working, but it did, to my entire satisfaction."

"Who was this friend?"

"Andy Potter."

"Ah! then you have met the boy?"

"Yes. He is in line of battle somewhere. I can answer no more questions, captain. We will meet again, perhaps. In the meantime, try and keep out of the clutches of Colonel Trafton. He is a villain of the first water."

And before Captain Chetwood could question the handsome youth further, he clapped spurs to his horse and galloped rapidly away.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE BATTLE RESUMED.

Preparations for a move all along the Union line were completed by half-past three in the afternoon.

At this time Captain Royal Chetwood had failed to find his command.

"My soul!" ejaculated the captain. "It must be that the —the regiment was captured in the fight this morning."

Meeting some members of the regiment, his worst fears were confirmed, and as there was no time for a prolonged search, the Pennsylvania captain resolved to enter the ranks and participate in the coming struggle; not as an officer, but as a private.

In one of the companies in the front line, the captain found a place, where, musket in hand, he felt himself ready to strike as a common soldier for the Union and the flag.

At length came the order for a general advance—the drums rolled along the line, the bugles pealed out, and heralded by the deep-mouthed cannon, the steady battalions moved forward.

It was a magnificent sight, the solid advance of that, but just now, fugitive host.

Emerging from the woods that had concealed it, the Union Army swung boldly out into the open field, and moved swiftly forward toward the Confederate position.

In the front line marched Captain Chetwood, musket in hand, as anxious as any one of that host to wipe out the woeful disgrace of the morning.

As they advanced, white puffs of smoke shot up along the front.

Boom! boom! boom!

The deep-mouthed cannon were silent on the enemy's side no longer.

Round-shot came whistling down upon the ranks of the Union, while the shrieking shells made music that was far from pleasant.

"Steady, boys!"

Tramp! tramp! tramp!

The long lines of blue moved majestically forward into the smoke of battle.

Captain Chetwood's musket fell to a level with the others in his line.

"Fire!"

Like lightning, a gleam of fire ran along the Union front, and a steady crash of musketry ensued.

The Confederates were in a strong position, and their batteries now opened briskly, while the infantry poured in a furious shower of musket-balls, that withered the Union front as a scorching flame licks up the prairie grass.

The men on either side of Royal Chetwood fell, mortally hurt.

"Forward, boys, forward!"

Still, on pressed the ranks of blue. But it was like rushing into the jaws of death.

"Forward, boys, forward!"

Again rang the cry of the officers along the front.

The hill seemed one blazing furnace now.

Shot and shell and musket-balls were hurled with fatal effect into the advancing lines of blue, and soon the Unionists halted, and actually staggered backward.

The day is not to be retrieved after all. In vain has been Sheridan's appeals.

The hungry, tired, disheartened troops cannot do more.

They have faced lead, and stood firm for a time; but it could not last, and once again the Union line wavers, and is going back in confusion.

"Hold your ground, boys! Come on!—come on!" shouts Captain Chetwood, who, forgetting that he is only a private now, rushes ahead of the reeling line and brandishes his gun above his head.

An answering shout goes down the line.

For a moment the men gather new strength from the intrepid actions of the soldiers in front. The line braces itself and stands firm.

"Come on, boys, and the day is ours!" shouted Chetwood.

On the instant the Confederate batteries opened on this part of the line with grape, piling the ground with mangled forms, mowing great swaths in the ranks of blue.

"Hold your ground! Forward!"

Captain Chetwood, unharmed, for a wonder, still urges the shattered line to press on.

But this appeal falls on deaf ears now.

And it was well that it was so. In other parts of the field the Union line, rent by shot and shell, was going rapidly back.

No help, no hope now, it seemed, for the Unionists.

They could but fall back and wait another day ere assuming the offensive.

It would seem prudent so to do at least.

But the commander of the Union forces was not of ordinary mettle.

Back went the shattered lines, and amid a rain of musket-balls, that buzzed and hissed like bees about his ears, Captain Chetwood followed the retreating line.

"Hello, captain! Where did you pop from?"

Captain Chetwood had stumbled upon Andy Potter in his retreat.

The Ohio boy bore a smoking musket, and about

his waist were strapped a long cavalry sabre and pistols.

He presented a strange appearance, and on a less serious occasion the captain would not have restrained his mirth.

"I'm glad to meet you again, Andy," cried the captain, as he grasped the youth by the hand. "So you have recovered from your weakness and are on the fight once more?"

"I'm powerful weak yet, captain," asserted the young Buckeye; "but I've seed Sheridan, and he's convinced me that we can lick them yit. I don't s'pose I'm more exhausted than the rest of ther boys. If they kin fight on empty stomachs, I 'low I kin. When I was to home I allus hunted the cows. No feller in the Miami bottoms as could hold a candle to Andy Potter huntin' cows. It's a fact, if I do say it, col—captain, I mean. Even dad hed to knock under thar, an' say Andy waz just good fur a cowboy, an' nothin' else. Ef he goes to war the fool'll run 'fore he smells gunpowder, he will, says dad——"

"I can bear testimony to the fact that you have done well to-day, Potter. I don't believe there's a braver man in the army," Chetwood interrupted.

"Sho! don't go pokin' fun at me, captain."

"It's the truth, my boy."

"Lord! and I've been weak's a cat all day. If I hadn't got that rap on the head, captain, I might amounted to somethin'."

The two men, unmindful of the fire, were moving at a walk across the field on the return.

There was not a cooler man on the field than Andy Potter, great, lank, awkward-looking fellow that he was, and Captain Chetwood could not help admiring his coolness under cicrumstances calculated to shake the strongest nerves.

"Hello! Look thar!"

As they went back a horseman was seen moving

rapidly through he Union lines, his hands in motion, gesticulating violently.

"Who can it be?"

"By ginger! it's the gen'ral! Don't you see?"

Captain Chetwood bent his gaze sharply upon the little man riding furiously amid the broken ranks.

"Don't you see? It's Sheridan!"

"Yes, it is indeed the commanding general," uttered Captain Chetwood. "He is appealing to the men."

It was true.

The sight of his army falling back before the fire of the enemy roused Sheridan almost to frenzy, and galloping amid the broken ranks, he, by his thrilling appeals and almost superhuman efforts, restored order; and, although his few remaining cannon could make but a feeble response to the overwhelming batteries in front, he ordered the advance to be resumed.

And our friends found the Union troops moving into battle line once more, overflowing with enthusiasm under the magnetic appeals of the little man, who had ridden that day in hot haste from Winchester to the rescue.

It does not seem possible that one man could exert such influence—such power over the many.

With one exception, the world has not seen, in modern times at least, a man like Sheridan—a general who could so enthuse his soldiers.

The exception is, of course, the Little Corporal, who rose, meteor-like, on the horizon of Europe near the close of the last century, and swept the face of the old world with fire and blood, his ambitious hopes crushed finally and forever on the historic field of Waterloo.

CHAPTER XXXV.

VICTORY.

"Wall, captain, we'll take a hand in this, I expect," uttered Andy Potter, drawing his sabre and waving it above his head.

"To be sure," answered the captain. "I wish I could see Mose. Have you met him to-day, Andy?"

"Mose?"

"Moses Bluff—'Loyal Mose,' some call him."

"Now I know who you mean," cried the Buckeye. "I've seed the feller ridin' like thunder at the head of his men, more'n once this day. He's a terror ag'in the rebs. Many's ther one as has fell before him. That's what they say, boss, that's what they say. I han't acquainted with ther feller—be you?"

The captain admitted that he knew "Loyal Mose," and that reports regarding his bravery were not exaggerated.

"He's what Uncle Jose would call a hoss on wheels," ejaculated Andy. "Hope I may hev the honor of meetin' this—this wheels on a hoss. I——"

"Here they come. The line of battle is advancing. Are you ready, Andy?" interrupted the captain, suddenly.

"Always ready, 'cept when I'm weak's a cat!" cried the Buckeye, again flourishing his sabre.

Then, for the first time, he seemed to notice that his companion was armed with a musket, without side-arms of any sort.

"See here, captain, what are you kerryin' a gun fur? An't you an officer?"

"I am."

"Wall, you don't need to kerry a gun, I reckon. Here, take my sword."

Captain Chetwood refused, good-naturedly, to accept the ponderous sabre.

Throwing back the skirt of his coat, he revealed the butt of a revolver to the youth.

"Gun and pistol is all I need. Come, Andy, we must not lose the chance to participate in this charge. The boys are going forward."

"Hooray for the Union!"

Andy Potter was alive to the occasion at once.

Again the Union lines advanced, infused with new courage by their gallant leader.

Boom! boom!

Once more the great guns of disunion bellowed on the afternoon air.

Side by side, Andy Potter and Captain Chetwood kept step to the music of the Union.

Above the long line of blue billowed the old flag, which was now advancing to victory or final defeat.

Then the Confederate breastworks blazed with musketry, and a storm of leaden pellets swept once more over the blood-soaked field.

"Steady, boys, we'll rout 'em this time."

Not a man flinched, but with gleaming eyes and compressed lips, pushed forward in the face of the belching batteries, the flaming crest.

On and on went the Unionists.

Nearer and nearer drew the line of blue to the flaming tide.

This was a time that tried men's souls, indeed, a time that was to determine the weal or woe of Sheridan's Army of the Shenandoah for all time.

Without flinching, inspired by the example of Sheridan, the Unionists swept forward into the jaws of death.

Soon the earth trembled under the awful crash of

great guns, and the very air seemed a-tremble with the great volume of musketry firing.

On went the old flag, rent and stained with battle grime, on to the foot of the crest; on, on up the slippery incline, through a storm of iron hail and leaden rain.

"Charge!"

The order had come for the final effort for the overthrow of Early's embattled legions.

Above the roar of musketry came the long-drawn yell of the Union charge.

On, with the rush of an avalanche, swept the Union host.

The Confederates must have been astonished, indeed, when the lately broken, fleeing Federals came pouring down upon them in a fierce charge that was irresistible.

The artillery ceased suddenly, the musketry died in spattering bursts, and over all came the yell of triumph.

Everything on the first line, the stone walls, the advanced crest, the tangled wood, and the half-finished breastworks had been carried.

Side by side still marched Captain Chetwood and Andy Potter.

No man in that army evinced greater courage than the Buckeye boy in that charge.

Spattered with the blood of those who had been cut down by the enemy's shells, Andy did not flinch, but moved on, swinging his sabre and shouting "Come on, boys!" at the top of his lungs.

By his side rushed Chetwood, both men a little in advance of the line at the last.

When the breastworks were carried, and shouts of victory rang over the field, Andy Potter mounted a stone wall, flopped his arms, and crowed lustily.

"The Confeds run like sin! Didn't we give it to 'em, colonel?"

Andy appealed to Captain Chetwood.

"We certainly made them run," answered the captain; "but it isn't best to crow before we're out of the woods."

"Wall, I think 'tis," cried Andy, quickly. "Crow while you have a chance: that's my idee."

"Perhaps that's logic, or something akin to it," returned the captain, with a laugh.

But the battle for the mastery was not yet decided. True, the Unionists had swept everything before them so far; but Early, from a new position, opened with his artillery, and shot and shell crashed through the Union ranks.

Sheridan, heedless of the storm, dashed along the front—giving all his orders to division and corps commanders in person: for in this fearful crisis he would trust no subordinates.

His eyes flashed fire, and his countenance wore a confident expression, while his short, emphatic appeals rang like a bugle call to his excited troops.

It was a time when one man's influence was felt as a mighty power. The magnetism of Sheridan was wonderful.

"Charge!"

Once more the order rang down the line.

With a shout that rolled in terrific volume along the line, the Unionists moved forward upon the second position of the enemy.

Through thickets, over the stone walls and ridges, the Unionists went with a thrilling cheer.

Still at the front pressed Captain Chetwood and Andy Potter.

It was a grand advance—a thrilling charge, and the Confederates were unable to stand before it.

A more astonished body of soldiers than that of Early's probably never existed.

A stand was made, and some desperate fighting in parts of the field ensued.

Elated with victory, Captain Chetwood dashed on some rods in advance of the line—into and through a dense thicket, running plump upon a line of gray-coats, who were firing their muskets for the last time ere going back in flight.

The sight of the blue-coat, and alone, maddened the foe, and they fired upon him, luckily without effect, in the confusion of the moment, then several dashed upon him with fixed bayonets, intent on running him through.

Captain Chetwood reeled back then.

Until this moment he had not realized how far he was in advance of the Union line.

"You're our meat, Yank!"

The captain drew his pistol and sent two of his opponents to earth, when his revolver was stricken from his hand.

At this moment the Confederate line fell back.

Two Southerners remained, however, to finish the daring Yankee who had so far forgotten himself as to rush ahead of his own line of battle.

Captain Chetwood staggered against a tree, an empty musket in his hand, with two bayonets at his breast, when a bright flash filled his eyes, and both muskets were stricken down.

"Hydra-heads, take that!"

A long sabre swept through the air, and both of the captain's assailants fell back, one going to earth with his skull split from crown to chin.

It was a tremendous blow, one that quite startled the captain, when he gazed at the long, slim arm of the sabre-wielder, Andy Potter.

"My soul, Andy! how did you do that?"

"A simple turn of the wrist, captain."

The second man was glad to escape by flight now, but a Federal bullet found his life ere he had gone many yards, and he fell to rise no more.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

WILD ROUT.

Once more the veterans of Longstreet and Early were on the run.

The fierce onslaught of the Union troop was too much for them, who had supposed the Federals incapable of further effort until the next day at least.

The enemy was astounded, dumfounded, panic-stricken.

The victory of the morning had been snatched from their hands, and Sheridan and his men were once more on the offensive, dashing with wild and irresistible fury upon the foe.

The astonished foe turned and fled in confusion over the fields.

As they streamed down into the Middletown Meadows, Sheridan saw that the time for the cavalry had come, and ordered a charge.

The blast of a bugle was the first notice Captain Chetwood received of the cavalry charge.

The captain was well to the right of the Union line, and not far from the spot over which the moving squadrons of mounted blue-coats would pass in their onward rush upon the enemy.

The infantry had come to a halt in this part of the field, and Captain Chetwood stood leaning upon his gun, with Andy Potter near, drawing the edge of his sword across a fallen gray-coat, to clear its surface of blood.

"Hello!" ejaculated Potter; "wasn't that a bugle?"

"It was a bugle, my boy," answered the captain. "The squadrons of Merritt and Custer are coming."

"And they'll hump the rebs through 'thout feed!" cried Potter. "Let's git over yonder and see 'em pass. Like as anyway, 'Loy'l Mose' 'll be there."

Captain Chetwood had not thought of this.

With quick step the two made their way still farther to the right.

Soon the loud tramp of moving horses fell on their ears.

Louder and louder it became, and soon a long line of cavalry appeared, coming at a run.

On the flank nearest to them rode men clad in blue tunics and slouch hats.

Captain Chetwood recognized them at once.

"The Loyal Tigers, and Mose still rides at their head," ejaculated Captain Chetwood, in a tone evincing the most intense satisfaction.

"Loyal Mose" and his men came forward at a gentle trot, not yet having given their animals rein.

"Halt!"

"Loyal Mose" gave the command as his troop came opposite Captain Chetwood.

The captain dashed forward instantly.

An empty saddle moved beside the leader of the Loyal Tigers.

"The man was wounded, and remained behind, but his horse would follow the command," explained Moses Bluff. "Mount, captain, and come on to the final victory."

The captain turned to Andy Potter, as if to question him.

"Go. I'll keep with the footmen."

The young and awkward Buckeye leaped to the side of the horse to whose back Captain Chetwood vaulted, unbuckled his belt and laid it, sabre and all, in front of his friend.

"You'll need it; I don't."

There was no time for remonstrance. The lines were already going forward on the run far in advance of the Loyal Tigers, so the captain accepted the weapons, buckled the belt about his waist, and was ready when the order was once more given to advance.

"Hurrah!"

With a hearty cheer, the Virginia rangers dashed forward toward the retreating brigades.

On and on, like the wind, swept the little party, going with such fearful velocity as to overtake the line of Unionists that had a minute before swept on in advance.

There was scarcely a show of resistance on the part of the Confederates.

A fearful panic had come upon them suddenly; such a panic as, earlier in the day, sent the Unionists fleeing like frightened sheep before the legions of Early.

Down upon the fleeing gray-coats came Custer's and Merritt's men, like a clattering tempest on the right and left, doubling up the flanks and cleaving a terrible path through the broken ranks.

Back to, and through the Union camps, which they had swept like a whirlwind in the morning, the panic-stricken foe went pell-mell, leaving all the artillery they had captured, and much of their own, and strewing the way with muskets, clothing, knapsacks, and anything that could impede their flight.

The infantry were too tired to continue the pursuit, but the cavalry kept it up, driving them through Strasburg to Fisher's Hill, and beyond, to Woodstock, sixteen miles distant.

It was a glorious ride for Captain Chetwood, and "Loyal Mose" was in his element, chasing the men he hated.

On the route Captain Chetwood spoke of his adventure and narrow escape from the hands of Colonel Trafton.

"So that villain was not killed as you supposed?" cried Moses Bluff, excitedly.

"It seems not."

"I am glad of it!" cried the young ranger, quickly. "The villain still lives for my vengeance."

"No mercy should be shown him!" cried the captain.

"None will be, if I meet the villain!" grated "Loyal Mose."

Then the rangers swept on in their pursuit, passing fleeing men and any amount of *debris* along the way.

Presently they passed down a hill and entered a wood.

In passing through the copse, Captain Chetwood became separated from "Loyal Mose," but he was closely followed by a portion of the Loyal Tigers.

The young captain had pushed his way forward but a little distance when an open glade appeared, and several gray-coats suddenly sprang from the ground —a dozen of them, perhaps.

"Down with your arms and surrender!" shouted Captain Chetwood, as he advanced with drawn sabre.

The two parties were about even, however, and the Confederates showed fight. They were cavalrymen, too, as their horses were standing near.

A grand scramble was made for the saddles.

Spang—spang!

The Tigers, who were not under Captain Chetwood's orders, began firing upon the enemy, and soon a brisk fight began.

"Ha! it is Captain Chetwood. We meet again, and this time I'll make sure of you!"

The Union captain recognized the voice, as he found himself confronted by Colonel Trafton, who had suddenly dashed upon the scene at the head of a fresh body of men. It was evident he hoped to kill Captain Chetwood, and put to rout the dozen men who followed at his back.

The colonel had counted without his host.

Captain Chetwood wielded his sabre to good advantage, and, in the midst of the fight, he felled the colonel from his horse.

Almost at the same instant a wild shout ran in the ears of the little band of rangers, who were outnumbered three to one.

"Loyal Mose" had come to the rescue, and, after a brisk fight, the Confederates were put to flight.

"Who has done this?"

Captain Chetwood was startled at this cry from the lips of Moses Bluff, as the young ranger flung himself from the saddle and stood beside the form of the Southern leader—Colonel Ezra Trafton.

He lay gasping, with a frightful wound in his neck, from which the blood gushed copiously.

"Some one has deprived me of my revenge!"

Captain Chetwood slipped from the saddle, and stood beside the commander of the Loyal Tigers.

"It was I who felled the villain," said the captain; "but it was in self-defense, I swear it."

"It is fate; but I hoped to mete out vengeance with this good right hand," said Bluff, in a sombre tone.

Just then the fallen colonel turned and glared furiously at the commander of the Loyal Tigers.

"Mose—Mose, it is you!" fell from the dying man's lips.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

DYING FOR THE FLAG.

"Colonel Trafton, we meet again, for the last time, it seems," uttered "Loyal Mose," as he bent over the dying Confederate raider.

A low muttered oath fell from the blood-stained lips of the colonel. His eyes rolled wildly, and it was

evident that he suffered mentally as well as physically.

"Where—where is the villain who struck this blow?" gasped the dying man.

Captain Chetwood stood before him.

"Ah, Chetwood, you have finished me, and now gloat over the deed. But—but you haven't won. She will hate the man who killed her promised husband. You have lost the game after all."

The man gasped, choked, and could say no more, and in a few minutes was dead.

Captain Chetwood shuddered.

It was true; he had slain the man to whom Bertha McVane was engaged. She would hate and scorn him now. But he could not be blamed. In self-defense he had slain the villain, a man who lacked the honorable nature of a gentleman or foeman honestly fighting for love of country.

"The man is dead," uttered a ranger, who stood near.

"Dead! Mary, your are avenged at last!"

It was a fervent amen that fell from the lips of "Loyal Mose."

A moment later he had vaulted into the saddle, and was ready to leave the scene.

The dead colonel was left where he had fallen, among several of his men, and the "Loyal Tigers" continued the pursuit after the fleeing Confederates.

The rangers came to a halt as the shadows of night fell over the fields and woods.

It had been a day well fought, a day well won, and great satisfaction prevailed among the "Loyal Tigers," as well as throughout the entire army.

"The day is won, my friend," said "Loyal Mose" to Captain Chetwood, "and night comes. Perhaps you would like to return to camp."

"And you?"

"Oh, as for me, I shall chase the enemy until morn-

ing, perhaps; but I will send some of my men back with you."

"No need of that, Mose. I think I will go back, but I can return alone," answered Captain Chetwood.

But "Loyal Mose" insisted on sending a guard, and at length the captain consented to accepting six of the "Loyal Tigers" as escort.

Bidding Mose good-by, with the promise that they would meet on the morrow, if nothing occurred to prevent, the two friends separated.

Back over the turnpike leading past Fisher's Hill to the old camp-ground the captain dashed, well satisfied with the work of the day.

He was still puzzled to know who Ned Bright was, and why he had interested himself in his behalf, and was resolved to know, should he ever meet the boy again.

"Hello, captain!"

A loud voice greeted the ears of Chetwood as he rode up to a camp-fire near a clump of trees.

"Sim Johnson!" exclaimed the captain, as he recognized one of his own men, the first he had seen belonging to his company since early morning.

"It's me for a fact, captain, Lord, though, I never expected to see ye ag'in. It's been an awful time."

"It has, indeed," admitted the captain; "but the victory is ours at last, thank Heaven!"

"You bet. Little Phil made the fur fly."

The soldier had gained his feet now—he had been reclining on the ground—and stood beside the captain's horse.

"Where are the rest of the boys, Sim?"

"Scattered all over," answered Johnson. "Some of 'em have got to the Potomac by this time, I reckon," and the man laughed, as if pleased.

The captain was about to drive on, when Johnson halted him again.

"Say, captain, I come nigh forgettin'—there's a

poor chap lays out here, wounded bad; mebbe he's dead 'fore this. I don't know who he is, only that he fit like all git out, and fell where he'd piled the rebs in dozens. He's called for Captain Chetwood a dozen times."

Quickly the captain sprang from his horse and stood beside the soldier, Johnson.

"Show me the spot."

"This way, captain."

Johnson led the way some little distance to the left, where a smoldering fire was discovered, under the branches of a tree.

"Captain Chetwood, why don't he come?"

The voice sounded familiar.

Releasing the bridle rein, the captain suddenly stepped into the circle of light.

There, on a little grassy mound, with face drawn and white, his body racked with pain, lay a wounded, dying soldier.

Quickly, Captain Chetwood knelt beside the fallen man.

"Captain, you did come!" cried the soldier, in a tone of thankfulness.

"I did come; but how did this happen? Are you badly hurt, Andy, my brave boy?"

"They have fixed me, captain. I'm going to die, and—and I am so glad you have come. I can die in peace now," uttered Andy Potter, huskily.

"Calm yourself, my boy. I will call the surgeon ——"

"No, no," the dying boy interrupted. "He saw me. The wound is goin' to kill me, he said so, but I knew it afore. We had a tussle a little ways from here, and I got the worst on't. They have fixed me for certain."

Captain Chetwood was deeply moved. Somehow, he had taken a deep interest in the awkward, but

true-hearted Buckeye boy, whom he had met for the first time that day.

"Ah, what's that?"

A loud cheer rang up from the camps below, and was caught up and echoed along the ridge.

"The boys are cheerin' for victory; more good news from the front," cried Johnson, who still stood near.

It was true!

The enthusiasm of the Unionists over their great and unexpected victory could not be quelled.

Long into the night the cheers of the men would ring out at intervals, although they had eaten nothing since the previous day, and were surrounded by dead and dying.

Notwithstanding the dead and wounded lay everywhere, and the field presented a ghastly spectacle, nothing could check the wild excitement and enthusiasm of officers and men at their wonderful victory.

For some moments, Andy Potter lay breathing heavily, listening to the shouts and cheers of the tired soldiers.

A smile swept his face at last.

"They got it bad, captain."

"They have been utterly routed," answered Chetwood.

" I am so glad I did what I could, captain. You can answer for that. I——"

"You have done brave work for the Union to-day, my noble boy. You are a hero."

The smile still lingered on the face of the dying young soldier.

"Washington was a hero, but such chaps as we han't no right to ther name. Dad always said I wa'n't good for anything. Won't you tell him, captain, ef you ever go ter Ohio, that Andy did fight a little; tell him—tell him that I didn't run, anyhow."

"He shall know all, my brave boy."

"I—I meant ter live an' go back with flyin' colors," pursued the youth, huskily. "Mother an' Uncle Jose would a been glad to see me, and knowed I'd fit fur ther flag. But the Lord knows best, don't he, captain?"

"Yes, my boy. Don't worry on that account. You have done your duty nobly. Some one has a monster crime to answer for, some one."

"I know it. That's what Uncle Jose always said. It's Jeff Davis and his pals. They'll be hung, won't they?"

"Perhaps."

"But then, I don't hate nobody, as I once did," uttered Andy again. "Mebbe Jeff Davis'll die of remorse, ef they don't hang him. I'm sorry if I've did anybody an injury, even the Confeds, if they didn't deserve it. But I fit for the flag; and them as spit on it, an' dragged it in the dust hez got ther punishment. I—I feel that the Stars an' Stripes'll come out ahead in the end. It's worth dyin' fur, captain."

"Yes," answered the captain, with moist eyes. "Thousands have died for the old emblem of the republic, and thousands more will lay down their lives, if need be, for its preservation."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

A STRANGE OCCURRENCE.

A short silence fell over the little group by the camp-fire.

The drawn, white face of the dying Buckeye boy looked almost ghastly in the sombre shadows.

It was an occasion for deep gravity, and the frequent cheers and laughter seemed out of place at such a time.

It was a glorious victory, however, and even the

wounded lifted up their heads and joined faintly in the cheers.

"We've licked 'em! Tell dad, and—and mother, that I died fur the old flag."

"I will, my boy."

The face of Andy Potter seemed illuminated with a sudden light, a look not of pain, but of gladness, seemed stealing over every feature.

Captain Chetwood bent low over the moving lips that now uttered words too low to be heard far by mortal ears.

"They have come—don't you see them—brave boys who have died fur the flag? They come, they come, and—and I am going over—over——"

The faint whisper perished on the trembling lips.

With a faint smile irradiating his sallow, homely countenance, the Buckeye boy breathed his last.

One more martyr, but one of thousands sacrificed, that the Union of our fathers might live.

"He has gone. A braver soul never struck a blow for the Union," uttered Captain Chetwood, as he rose to his feet, and stood with folded arms, looking sadly down into the face of the dead young soldier.

"He fit like a tiger, captain; I can swear to that!" cried Sim Johnson, with emphasis.

Captain Chetwood soon walked from the spot, and stood leaning against a tree, lost in pained thought.

By killing Colonel Trafton he had forever alienated the affections of Bertha McVane whom he felt he loved dearer than ever.

But then, what did it matter? As the colonel's wife she could never have been anything to him.

"I will visit Clymore's to-morrow," muttered the young captain, "and tell Bertha how Colonel Trafton came to die. I will not leave her in doubt as to the time and manner of his death."

* * * * * * * *

The battle known in history as Cedar Creek or

Middletown, had been fought and won by the Union forces.

In some respects this is the most remarkable battle in history.

Other lost fields have been won; but rarely by the presence of a single man.

Marengo was lost to Napoleon, but won again by the arrival of the gallant Desoix with his fresh column. Blucher's opportune arrival with sixty thousand fresh troops saved the day for the beaten English at Waterloo.

Shiloh was lost to Grant, but won again by the opportune arrival of Buell, with his trained battalions; but here a lost battle was won by the arrival of Sheridan alone.

By the power of his single presence as he dashed along the shattered lines, and the magic of his voice, as, now gay and confident, now stern and terrible, he strengthened the discouraged or awed the timid, and recalled the fugitives, he was able to reorganize the broken ranks almost under the guns of the enemy.

He not only dissipated despair, and restored confidence, but breathed into the army enthusiasm and daring, and positive strength, so that after hours of defeat and terrible losses in men and artillery, it not only made a successful stand, but broke into a furious offensive, and charging the victorious enemy behind his intrenchments, drove him in utter rout from the field.

This single battle, if he had fought no other, would stamp Sheridan as a great commander.

The Union loss in this battle amounted to over six thousand men, while that of the Confederates was not much over a third as great, thus showing under what immense disadvantage Sheridan snatched a victory from the very jaws of defeat.

The North was soon ringing with the news of Sheridan's great victory.

Bells were rung, cannon fired, and every manifestation of joy exhibited through the Northland.

It was a victory with a meaning.

It was the last great battle in the Shenandoah.

No one was more gratified than Grant, who, as soon as he heard the news, telegraphed to the Secretary of War these words:

"I had a salute of one hundred guns fired from each of the armies here, in honor of Sheridan's last victory. Turning what bid fair to be a disaster into a glorious victory, stamps Sheridan, what I have always thought him, one of the greatest of generals.

"U. S. GRANT, Lieutenant-general."

The enemy made no other attempt to invade the North through the Shenandoah Valley, which was now called, for them, the Valley of Humiliation.

About noon the next day, some cavalry detachments returned to the Union position, and among them were the "Loyal Tigers."

Their ranks had been perceptibly thinned in the great fight, but nearly four-score of blue tunics rode behind their gallant young leader.

The two men, Chetwood and "Loyal Mose," stood under a tree discussing the situation.

"We have broken the backbone of the civil war in this part of Virginia; I am sure of it," said Moses Bluff, earnestly.

"What will you do now?"

"I propose to be in at the end," responded Bluff, "and I have thought of joining Grant's forces in front of Petersburg."

"You are determined to see the end of this war, no matter if your enemy is dead?"

"I am. I am enlisted for the war, captain, as you are, I suppose?"

"Certainly. I should be glad to keep you company,

Mose, but must remain with the Sixth Corps, in which my regiment is incorporated."

"Of course."

"I am going down to Clymore's," said Chetwood.

"To-day?"

"I had thought of it."

"I will accompany you, if you do not object," said "Loyal Mose." "I am anxious to see that black-eyed girl who nursed me so faithfully, and saved my life on two occasions. I tell you, captain, she's a whole team. If it wasn't for Rosa Anderson, I'd surely lose my heart there."

"To a fire-eater of the worst sort?"

"Tush, captain. Bertha McVane is bitter enough in her politics, but she's a true woman all the same."

Captain Chetwood's face became very grave.

"Do you know, Mose, I expect to come in for a fearful scorching when this girl learns that I slew Colonel Trafton."

"Why so? What was the colonel to her?"

"Her betrothed husband."

"No!" in a tone of great surprise.

"It is true. She told me so with her own lips."

"Good heavens——"

The young ranger did not give vent to further words.

He seemed too greatly startled—too deeply moved to say more.

An hour later, Captain Chetwood and "Loyal Mose" might have been seen riding at a headlong pace down a flinty turnpike, followed by six rangers as escort.

A strange thing happened not twenty rods from Orvin Clymore's gate.

When going at a rapid pace, Captain Chetwood's horse plunged to earth as if shot to the heart, and his rider was flung violently to the ground, where he lay, with head gashed and bleeding, from wounds

inflicted by the sharp stones of the pike, and insensible.

The horse was dead.

It needed no examination to prove this.

The fallen man came near being crushed under the heels of the troopers' horses, so sudden had been the catastrophe.

"Is the captain dead?"

"What shall we do?"

These were the questions that Bluff's men asked, when they came to their young leader's side, as he bent over the fallen captain.

"I do not think he is dead," answered Mose, whose own face was quite pale. "We must get him out of this, and to a house at once."

"Strangest thing out," uttered one of the rangers. "Never saw a horse fall dead 'thout bein' teched afore."

"Loyal Mose" made no comment.

He ordered his men to lift the insensible form of the captain, while he led the way up to the door of Orvin Clymore's farm-house.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

NED BRIGHT AGAIN APPEARS.

When Captain Royal Chetwood opened his eyes, he gazed about him in utter astonishment.

Where was he, and what had happened?

Above his head was a white ceiling, and around him the walls of a room.

This satisfied him that he was not on the battle-field. His brain was in a whirl, and he could not, for the life of him, tell where he was, and what had happened.

His head ached severely, and was swathed in bandages.

While he gazed about him in utter bewilderment, a door opened; he did not see it but heard the creaking sound, and some one entered the room.

Presently the sound of a dress rustled near, and the next moment a young woman stood at his side.

"Bertha McVane!" ejaculated the Union captain, in evident wonder.

She smiled now, and laid a soft hand on his bandaged brow.

"You are better—you will live, captain!"

"What the duse has happened?" cried Royal, attempting to sit upright, but sinking into the pillows with a gasp of pain.

"Don't try to sit up. You are in a bad way yet, Captain Chetwood," said Bertha, soothingly. "You were thrown from your horse, and left here by Moses Bluff yesterday."

"Yesterday! My soul! have I been lying here all this time?" gasped the astonished captain.

"You have. Don't worry. You are safe here. The Tigers have gone on, and I am to care for you; it is Mr. Bluff's instructions."

"Mr Bluff," muttered Chetwood.

" 'Loyal Mose'—your friend."

"Yes—yes," uttered the dazed captain, watching the maiden's face narrowly.

She was the same Bertha, yet she seemed strangely altered, too, since he had last met her.

When she learned that Colonel Trafton was dead, and by his hand, she would doubtless feel more like wishing him dead than nursing him back to life.

She seated herself at the head of the bed and watched him curiously.

"Bertha."

"Well, captain?"

"I was thrown from my horse and hurt, you tell me, yesterday?"

"Yes."

"And Moses Bluff left me here?"

"Yes."

"Bertha, do you know——"

"Do I know what?" she questioned, as he hesitated.

"That—that Colonel Trafton is dead?"

"Yes."

"You do?'

"I know all about it. The colonel was killed in the battle."

"Who told you that?"

" 'Loyal Mose.' "

How calm she was!

Not the slightest show of emotion.

He could not understand it.

Indeed, he was fairly bewildered.

She, the betrothed wife of the dead colonel, and yet not a tear.

He looked at her searchingly.

"Bertha."

"Yes, Captain Chetwood."

Her voice sounded strangely tender to him.

"Did you know how Colonel Trafton died?"

"No."

The gallant captain's heart sank low again.

But he was resolved to tell her all.

She would hate him—she would despise him—but, no matter.

It was his duty to tell her the truth, be the consequences what they might.

"I fear you will abhor me, Bertha," he said, in tremulous tones, "but it was his life or mine—I killed Colonel Trafton!"

"Ah!"

"Yes. I cut him down in self-defense."

"I believe you, Captain Chetwood, and—I am not angry with you for the deed, as you seem to fear."

"Bertha!"

"There—there, lie still. You must not excite yourself."

She laid her soft hand tenderly on his forehead.

"You think my actions strange. You wonder why I take the colonel's death so calmly. The man who was to have been my husband. Lie quiet and I'll explain all to you. Then you will understand."

She looked at him strangely, and, smoothing back the hair from his forehead, continued:

"Although Colonel Trafton was my betrothed, I am confident he never loved me as a woman expects to be loved. The vail fell from my eyes the day he attempted the life of your friend. He then stood before me in a new and evil light. A man capable of perpetrating any crime to achieve an unhallowed purpose. My visit here at Uncle Orvin's gave me the opportunity to discover the real character of my promised husband. Moses Bluff told me all. How the colonel deceived his sister, and when that unfortunate woman followed him to Charleston on the eve of the war, how her death was compassed by the conspiracy of her betrayer and another man as bad as himself. I know how you, Royal, tried to save that poor girl—and the mystery of that shooting affair on the old stone turnpike in which you figured in the papers at the time, is plain to me at last. I am also fully informed about his attempts upon your life of late. How to cover his vindictive purpose he tried to brand you as a spy. Do you wonder any longer that his memory has no sorrow in it for me? That I have ceased to regard him in any other light than that of a man whom it were a charity to forget?"

Royal clasped the girl's unresisting hand, and after a pause raised it unchecked to his lips.

"Bertha," he said, softly, "did you ever really love Colonel Trafton?"

"No," she said, with averted face. "I am sure I never did. It was to please the Senator, my father, that I accepted his advances. Once engaged, I admit I tried to like him—I don't think I succeeded in the least. He repelled me—yet I would have married him in the end, I suppose, had he not met his death and his true character remained unexposed."

"You had a narrow escape from an uncongenial union."

"For which I shall never cease to thank our Heavenly Father."

"Twice he attempted to murder me. Once Bluff saved my life, but the last time it was a boy, Ned Bright, by name, who came between me and the hand of Colonel Trafton."

"Indeed! Ned and I are great friends."

"Is it possible?"

"It is; and I will call him, if you wish to see and thank him for saving your life."

"Nothing would please me better."

Bertha arose and passed from the room, leaving the captain to his own reflections.

Captain Chetwood had relapsed into a dreamy state when the door again opened, and some one crossed the floor and confronted the wounded Federal.

Chetwood turned his head and saw Ned Bright standing there, gazing at him with a smile on his face.

"Ned Bright! I am glad to see you. I——"

A low, musical laugh filled the ears of the captain.

And then a sudden revelation burst on the brain of the invalid.

"My soul! It is Bertha McVane!"

CHAPTER XL.

CONCLUSION.

"You penetrate my disguise easy enough now; but on the field of battle you did not recognize me," said the girl, sinking into a chair.

"You deceived Colonel Trafton as well," returned the captain. "But how did you come to visit the battle-field in this guise, Bertha? I am bursting with curiosity."

"I can explain in a few words. I wished to visit a neighbor who lives some miles down the road. Knowing the country was full of hard characters, I assumed this disguise for safety. It was on my return that curiosity led me to the victorious camp of the Confederates. It was by accident that I saw you in the hands of Mosby's men. I planned to save you because —well, because we were pretty good friends, you know. I did not suspect murder was meditated. It was only to save you from a Southern prison that I planned your release; but it seems my clever device saved your life.

"Being pretty well acquainted with the country, I led the squad into the Union lines before they were aware of what was being done."

The maiden's explanation was of deeper moment than would at first seem.

Bertha, with her fierce Southern proclivities, would not go thus out of her way to serve a Union officer unless her heart was in the act.

Captain Chetwood realized this.

"Bertha," he said, softly, while his whole soul was reflected in his ardent gaze, "tell me, darling, that all that I have suffered during the last four years

has been but an ugly dream. Tell me that I may yet hope. Oh, Bertha," and he held out his arms to her, "are we still enemies?"

"No, Royal, no," she exclaimed, throwing herself into his embrace, and nestling her head upon his shoulder. "We are not enemies, for I love you with all my heart—with all my soul!"

"My own true darling!"

One week later Captain Chetwood was able to rejoin the army.

At the gate, repaired since the raid, the captain bade the maiden farewell.

"When the war ends, let the outcome be what it may, you will be mine, Bertha?"

"You have my word, Royal."

He raised her hand to his lips, then sprang to his saddle and sped rapidly away.

* * * * * * *

The war for the Union was well night at an end even then, though Bertha McVane did not suspect the truth.

A few weeks later Captain Chetwood went to join Grant's army before Richmond, and here he met "Loyal Mose" again.

One day a detachment of prisoners was brought into camp.

Royal Chetwood was inspecting these unfortunates.

The first to receive his attention were of course, the officers, of which there were perhaps a dozen.

"Upon my word, this is an unexpected pleasure, Captain Chetwood," said one of them, with a rich brogue.

"Major Chetwood, if you please; but I do not recognize you, sir, though you appear to know me."

"Upon me soul, is it possible? Have I so changed, then, that you fail to perceive your humble servant, Major de Banyan?"

"Indeed, it is you, then," said Royal, coldly.

"Faith, it is, please the pigs. For the sake of old acquaintance, captain—pardon me, Major Chetwood, I hope you'll be after making my stay as easy as possible."

"I cannot promise you any different treatment from that accorded to your brother officers."

"Faith, a gentleman and an officer——"

"You will be treated with all due consideration your rank entitles you to. But permit me to state that your conduct in Charleston, as it came under my eye, was not consistent with the character of a gentleman, but rather that of a—pardon my plainness—blackguard."

Major Chetwood passed on.

The reader easily perceives that our hero had been advanced in rank, for personal valor on the field of battle.

Not many months later, Lee, the sole prop of the Southern cause, hemmed in by Grant, and without a single hope of succor, was forced to surrender unconditionally.

"Richmond has fallen!"

The cry was echoed throughout the length and breadth of the nation.

The weary struggle was over at last.

Peace, that blessed word, was an accomplished fact.

The victorious army of veterans passed through Washington and were disbanded.

A few days later Royal Chetwood and Mose parted, for the time being, the latter going to Maryland to claim the hand of Rose Anderson, one of the fairest of Maryland's fair daughters.

Major Chetwood did not forget the promise he had made to Andy Potter, and soon after leaving the army he sought out, in the Miami Valley, the home of Deacon Potter, and there gave the good deacon evidence that his son had amounted to something at

last—he had died for the Union and the flag, and was a genuine hero.

It was a year after the war ere Major Chetwood claimed the hand of Bertha McVane, and the marriage took place in the wealthy home of the McVanes, at Charleston, South Carolina. The war ended sectional strife forever, let us hope, and the graves of the dead, both North and South, are watered with tears. We would say, with the poet:

"Under the sod and the dew,
Waiting the judgment day;
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[THE END.]

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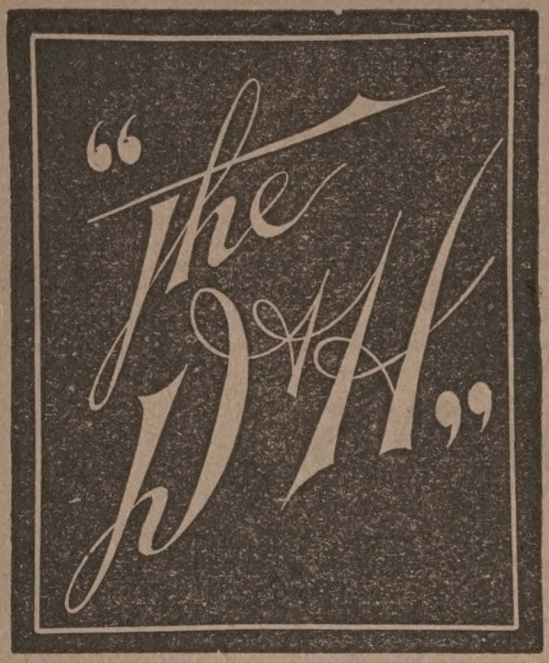

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